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Building School Leaders' Capacity to Challenge Anti-Black Racism in Schools

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Abstract

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) was developed based on a problem of practice (PoP) in the Green District School Board (GDSB) related to equity leadership, and building the capacity and efficacy of school leaders to address anti-Black racism in K-12 schools. Despite efforts to create more equitable and inclusive classrooms, Ontario schools continue to display achievement gaps and negative outcomes for Black students, including streaming into courses below their abilities, harsher discipline, and higher push out and suspension rates compared to that of their peers. Feeling of isolation, lack of engagement and teacher connection further exacerbate the racial trauma and the negative experiences of Black students. This work is undertaken during a global pandemic that has further exposed the depth of societal inequities, and the growing demand for action and accountability to correct the prevailing racial injustices impacting Black students. Using a critical race theory (CRT) lens, the OIP outlines a change implementation plan that looks at key structures, learning approaches, and accountability measures that center the voices and perspectives of Black students and their families in order to break down and dismantle systemic barriers and address interpersonal racism and discrimination in schools. Social justice, culturally responsive, and distributive leadership are key leadership approaches to disrupt the status quo and create inclusive spaces. A hybrid version of Lopez's NOFS, Kotter's XLR8, and Deming's PDSA models are used to stop and name anti-Black racism, and structure the necessary learning and supports for school leaders to authentically engage with the Black community and co-create intentional actions that transcend into tangibly different experiences and outcomes, within a culturally responsive school environment.

Keywords: anti-Black racism, Black students, critical race theory, school leaders, culturally responsive

Executive Summary

Canada, and more specifically the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is known for its diversity and multicultural make up. However, there is continued evidence of various forms of discrimination, including racism that negatively impact the daily lives of marginalized populations, including the Black community (Anti-Racism Directorate, 2017; City of Toronto, 2017; Henry, 2019; Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2020). The legacy of anti-Black racism lives within all of our current social, economic, and political institutions, including the education system. Decades of data clearly demonstrate that the education system, founded on euro-centric views and curriculum, has not only failed to meet the needs of Black students, but has compounded negative outcomes with experiences of isolation, dismissal of incidents of racism, harsh discipline, and differential treatment from educators (James & Turner, 2017; Sanders 2022; Turner, 2019). This Organization Improvement Plan (OIP) examines data related to the outcomes and experiences of Black students, and provides a framework to lay a foundational pathway to recognize and acknowledge racial inequities, inter-personal and systemic discrimination and barriers, as a critical step in the journey to eliminate anti-Black racism in education.

Chapter 1 describes the leadership Problem of Practice (PoP) in the Green District School Board (GDSB) that centers on developing school leaders' capacity and self-efficacy in addressing anti-Black racism issues within their schools. The PoP is viewed through a radical humanist lens and grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) to evaluate the symptoms of systemic discrimination of Black students including colour-blind ideology and racism-neutral approaches in education (James & Turner, 2017; Kohli et at., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Lopez, 2013). The guiding questions about leadership capacity, relationship-building and leading meaningful change include:

1. What knowledge and skills do school-level leaders need to engage in courageous conversations about race that ignite critical self-reflection and engagement in anti-racist work?
2. How do we build relationships founded on trust with parents, guardians, and the Black community to authentically engage in a collaborative change process that centers the voice and experience of Black students and families?
3. How can system leaders develop and support the use of a clear road map to decolonize school culture and embed culturally responsive practices within everyday operations?

These questions, along with an examination of GDSB's organizational change readiness will help to inform strategic implementation and communication of the Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP).

Chapter 2 identifies social justice, culturally responsive and distributive leadership as the chosen approaches to change that will honour the lived experiences of Black students and create authentic opportunities to collaborate with partners to eliminate marginalization and discrimination in classrooms and schools (Khalifa et al., 2018; Lopez, 2020; Shah, n.d.). The "why" behind the OIP is evaluated through a critical analysis of GDSB's change readiness and the exploration of potential solutions or pathways to building school leaders' knowledge, understanding, and capacity for equity leadership. The most appropriate solution combines the co-creation of an Equity Leadership Framework, supported through courageous conversations about race. A hybrid approach incorporating the Deming's Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model, Kotter's Eight Stage Process (XLR8), and Lopez's Name, Own, Frame, and Sustain (NOFS) framework will guide the implementation process and communication strategy employed for successful change. Although the process may appear to be linear, it is in fact, iterative and

cyclical in nature, requiring constant engagement in the feedback cycle with partners to inform both progress and evaluation of short-term wins and desired results. Leadership for equity and social justice are central to the work of "unleading" to eradicate systemic racism and barriers, and ultimately create newly imagined possibilities for schooling (Shah, n.d.).

Chapter 3 outlines the plan for implementing, monitoring, and communicating the organizational change process for the selected solutions to the PoP based on GDSB's current state of readiness. Through social justice, culturally responsive and distributive leadership approaches, the implementation plan will involve constant informal and formal communication, engagement, and collaboration with partners throughout the process, working through Lopez's framework of naming, owning, framing and sustaining work to dismantle anti-Black racism in schools. The same level and depth of partnership and communication will be paramount in monitoring and evaluating the implementation plan to ensure that the lived experiences and perspectives of Black students and their families are continually centered in order to challenge the status quo and ensure greater accountability. A communication strategy will be intertwined with the implementation plan to highlight the urgency for change, build a shared vision, and empower partners for change, both in the initial stages and the future stages of the journey.

This OIP presents an initial framework and plan to lay the initial foundation to build school leaders' capacity and efficacy to address anti-Black racism in schools. Working to dismantle systemic racism and educational barriers is a journey, and school leaders must engage in ongoing critical reflection to combat longstanding inequities and challenges in education (Shah, n.d.). For continued growth and change, all educators must be held accountable to their ethical responsibility to create inclusive learning spaces that are reflective and responsive to the unique needs of Black students and their families.

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As I near the end of this chapter of my own growth and development, I am deeply humbled by how my world view has been challenged, changed and expanded. The power of interrogating how I situate myself within our diverse, complex society, and how I choose to use my voice and agency cannot be described in words. To all of the students and families over the years who have left a footprint on my heart, trusted me to advocate and journey with them, I promise to continue my learning and do better.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acronyms

ARA (Anti-Racism Act)

CODE (Council of Directors of Education)

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease)

CRT (Critical Race Theory)

GDSB (Green District School Board)

GTA (Greater Toronto Area)

HRTO (Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario)

NOFS (Name, Own, Frame, and Sustain)

OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)

OLF (Ontario Leadership Framework)

OME (Ontario Ministry of Education)

PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act)

PoP (Problem of Practice)

XLR8 (Accelerate)

Definitions

Anti-Black Racism: Anti-Black racism is prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, to the extent that anti-Black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger White society. Anti-Black racism is manifest in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians, which includes unequal opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. (Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism, 2018)

Marginalization: Marginalization is a long-term, structural process of systemic discrimination that creates a class of disadvantaged minorities. Marginalized groups become permanently confined to the fringes of society. Their status is perpetuated through various dimensions of exclusion, particularly in the labour market, from full and meaningful participation in society. (Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism, 2018)

Race: Race is a term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits (phenotypes) such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has created (i.e., “socially constructed”), with significant consequences for people’s lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural or religious groupings. (Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism, 2018)

Racial equity: Racial equity is the systemic fair treatment of all people. It results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. It contrasts with formal equality where people are treated the same without regard for racial differences. Racial equity is a process (such as meaningfully engaging with Indigenous, Black, and racialized clients regarding policies, directives, practices and procedures that affect them) and an outcome (such as equitable treatment of Indigenous, Black, and racialized clients in a program or service). (Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism, 2018)

Chapter 1: Introduction and the Problem of Practice

Canada is known as a multicultural nation that embraces human rights and diversity, yet racism, homophobia, gender-based violence, and other forms of discrimination are historically and currently evident in our communities (Anti-Racism Directorate, 2017: Henry, 2019; Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2020; Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), 2009). As the province with the most multi-racial and multi-ethnic diversity, Ontario has unique challenges in meeting the changing needs of an increasing multicultural and complex society (Anti-Racism Directorate, 2017: Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2020; OME, 2009). Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy is implemented within the context of the Education Act, and is designed to promote fundamental human rights within the education system (OME, 2009). Ensuring equity and inclusion within schools directly impacts students' futures and life outcomes, and it is a moral imperative to deconstruct and re-build a system free from systemic barriers that hold students back (Ladson-Billings, 2009; OME, 2017; Sanborn et al., 2021; Stembridge, 2020). An equitable and inclusive education system aims to understand, identify, address, and eliminate biases, barriers, and power dynamics that negatively impact students' prospects for learning within a safe and welcoming environment (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Kohli et al., 2017; OME, 2014; Sanborn et al., 2021; Stembridge, 2020). Ontario's public education system continues to have goals of high student achievement coupled with closing the achievement gaps for marginalized groups including recent immigrants, Aboriginal and Black students, and students with special education needs, but has much work to do to realize them (OME, 2009, 2014, 2017). Despite the initiatives that have been mandated by the OME, there has been a historical (in)capacity to place African Canadian cultural influence and perspectives, that are germane to the failings of liberalism, on the public agenda (Kitossa, Howard, & Lawson, 2019). Viewed in this context, the

lack of action and leadership is a crisis rooted in the overall cultural, social, and political matrix of exploitation that African people in the diaspora experience generally within society and its institutions (Kitossa, Howard, & Lawson, 2019).

Organizational Context

Over the past few years, compounded by the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, there has been a steady rise in social justice movements calling for action and accountability in addressing long-standing racial inequities within the education system (Fullan, 2021; Lopez, 2017, 2020; Quinn et al., 2021). Within the larger picture of equity, addressing anti-Black racism is a key focus in education as Black students continue to be one of the most marginalized groups experiencing a disparity in positive outcomes (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Dei, 2003; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; James & Turner, 2015, 2017; Sanborn et al., 2021). In July 2020 through the Council of Directors of Education (CODE), directors across Ontario's 72 publicly funded district school boards acknowledged on their website (https://www.ontariodirectors.ca/), the continued existence of systemic racism, bias and discrimination. Directors specifically acknowledged anti-Black racism and the need to create safe, respectful and inclusive environments for staff and students The recent spotlight on anti-Black racism has created internal and external pressures to advance the racial equity agenda, and has also provided a unique opportunity to shift conversations about school improvement that center on decolonization and creativity in building more inclusive learning spaces for students.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Green District School Board (GDSB, a pseudonym) is a publicly funded school board that operates just outside of the main city, serving over 20 000 students within 40 elementary and secondary schools. As mandated for all school boards in Ontario, GDSB has developed specific

policies to guide and support the elimination of systemic barriers and biases that lead to disproportionate outcomes for marginalized students (OME, 2009, 2014, 2017). With equity as a key priority, GDSB's mission is to inspire all students to reach their full potential by prioritizing well-being and a learning environment where all students feel an authentic sense of belonging. While encouraging a reflective and open-to-learning stance, the district is engaging in learning about bias, discrimination, systemic barriers to create a more equitable space for marginalized students. In the journey towards racial equity in the education system, it is crucial to acknowledge students' multiple social identities and understand culturally responsive and relevant teaching strategies that engage the diversity of learners within the classroom (Khalifa, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009, 2021; OME, 2013; Pinder, 2012). Despite Ministry policies and legislation, there is continued evidence of disparity in outcomes for Black students (Dei, 2003, Kohli et al., 2017; Lopez, 2013; Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2020).

Organizational Structure, Leadership Approaches and Practices

The OME oversees the publicly funded education system and sets provincial standards for policies, and provides operational guidance to school boards. Appendix A illustrates the reporting structure and departmental responsibilities within the OME.

Similarly, the school board is also built on a hierarchical structure with the director of education at the top. Being a smaller board, GDSB has a senior team of eight corporate and academic supervisory officers who oversee the various areas related to school operations led by the director of education. The general leadership approach used in GDSB aligns with instructional and distributive leadership models, with school administrators facilitating learning opportunities in alignment with the vision of the OME and school board. Although the OME and school boards create plans and endeavour to change the system, the missing piece is centering

equity through the lens of critical theory and mentorship to build capacity in meeting the needs of a diverse student population (Capper, 2019; Khalifa, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2013).

Current Mission and Organizational Strategy

Over the past two decades, GDSB continues to experience growth in both enrolment and diversity within communities. This diversity must be acknowledged and centered in the use of culturally responsive pedagogy that takes into account the differential academic performance and schooling experiences of students (Dei, 2003; Lopez, 2013). An inclusive education system requires leaders and educators to deconstruct and decolonize our current structures and practices to re-imagine a new space that incorporates the voices of diversity and change. This space should prioritize difference and diversity, and ultimately challenge the normalized order of how things are, particularly the dominance of Western knowledge production (Capper, 2019; Dei, 2003, Downey & Burkholder, 2018; Ramlackhan, 2020; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014).

In order to address the current inequities within the education system, a paradigm shift in how we view and think about education is required. The move towards equity and social justice will need a shift from structural functionalist or interpretivist epistemologies to a more critically oriented epistemology (Capper, 2019). As school boards acknowledge the presence of systemic barriers, power imbalances, and marginalization of particular groups of students, the solution relies on viewing the world, the current status quo and relationships with a lens of critical theory (Capper, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). From this viewpoint, the ultimate mission of schools and the education system is to ensure social justice and equity. To move towards this goal, leaders, educators and all staff working within the education system, need to take a reflective and critical look at themselves, the daily operation of schools, and the integrate how the broader system impacts marginalized individuals and groups (Griffiths, 2013; Ladson-

Billings, 2021; Sanborn et al., 2021). The core mission of GDSB remains to inspire all students to achieve to their fullest potential. How the district goes about achieving this goal must center diverse and marginalized voices and continuously engage in courageous learning conversations, and be open to vulnerability in engaging with a diverse range of partners to rethink and rebuild what is currently not working.

Leadership Position and Lens Statement

As an educator and leader with over 20 years of experience, I have learned that the most important attributes needed to positively impact student well-being, safety and success is empathy and understanding for the diverse students and families that are entrusted to the school system for six and a half hours each school day. It is imperative for educators and leaders to make intentional efforts to get to know their students, acknowledge the entirety of who they are, and respond with teaching practices that engage learners with diverse backgrounds, strengths, needs and interests (Khalifa, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021; OME, 2013). At the very foundation of well-being and learning are relationships. Relationships with leaders and students, students with teachers, and all of the interconnected ways the school community engages with one another become the story of the school experience for each individual student.

As a leader who is fully aware of the urgency and need to be more culturally responsive, I am advocating for learning opportunities for school leaders and educators to engage in critical self-reflection and courageous conversations about race in order to improve the system for minoritized students (Lopez, 2018; Singleton, 2015). It is not enough to accept the historical and current data that reveals ongoing and systematic discrimination within Ontario's education system (Codjoe, 2001; Dei, 2008; James, 2019). In order to positively impact the experiences and achievement of Black students, it is a moral imperative to engage in learning conversations

that center diverse students, traditionally marginalized students, varied approaches to teaching and discipline, and question our current practices both at the system and individual level. As Lopez (2016) clearly states, “This will not happen by accident…This requires leadership that is dauntless, fearless and individuals who are willing to take risks on behalf of students” (p. 12). This is powerful statement that challenges a long-standing culture in education where teachers are polite and do not want to engage in dialogue that may be viewed as critical of a colleague’s conduct or practice. Professional learning and dialogue usually occur within comfortable spaces and does not require engagement with the tension that is continuing to build over the inequities that exist within in our schools (DiAngelo, 2018; Lopez, 2016; Singleton, 2015).

The achievement gaps that continue to exist for racialized and historically marginalized groups are unconscionable, and highlights the moral imperative to address the structural and systemic barriers built into our education system (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018, Prager, 2011). Not only do educational leaders need to examine how the education system is structured and operates, they must also examine their own role and responsibilities for that system. The renewed vision of education in Ontario centers equity as the critical component in the commitment to the success of every child regardless of factors such as ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, race, and socio-economic status (OME, 2017). Educational leaders play a critical role in shaping the environment for both students and staff, and thus must be committed and held accountable for upholding and protecting equity and human rights (Frick, 2008; Kirshner et al., 2021; OME, 2017). With equity at the forefront of the education agenda, leadership decisions must be made through a critical lens in order to start making the structural and systemic changes needed.

Personal Positionality (Agency, Power, Personal Voice)

The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) provides an overview and structure of school and system leadership, along with the core capacities that are required in responding to the need for continuous improvement (Leithwood, 2013). In the past, and evidenced through the OLF, equity referred to the reallocation of resources to support historically marginalized students. Today, equity encompasses a more fulsome lens, looking critically and deeply at oppressive structures and the system itself (Andreotti, 2021; Capper, 2019; Dei, 2008; Lopez, 2013). Through an equity lens, it is the responsibility of system leaders to provide ongoing evidence-based instructional and operational guidance to improve teaching and learning, in alignment with a broadly shared vision and organizational goals. The tangible shift and openness in pointing out and discussing systemic inequities can be seen in more recent research and documents re-shaping educational leadership to focus in on equity and human rights (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2022; Kirshner et al., 2021; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). The local and global social upheaval has been highlighted and exacerbated by the pandemic of COVID-19 (Fullan, 2021; Lopez, 2017). The urgency for change is undeniable with increased media attention to incidents of racism and hate crimes against the backdrop of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO), social movements such as Black Lives Matter, and the requirements under the Anti-Racism Act (ARA).

As a supervisory officer, I work with a system-level team that includes other supervisory officers, managers, and various staff across the district to identify and achieve goals based on the organization's mission and values. Supervisory officers have agency and power to influence and impact at the meso-level through policy and structural changes. Further, through the development of learning opportunities, the vision and goals permeate to the micro-level to impact the student and staff experience. As a racialized female leader, my perspective is deeply

rooted in the challenges and personal experiences with discrimination while growing up in a community that expanded exponentially in terms of diversity over the past few decades.

As a radical humanist, I acknowledge the limitations of the public education system and believe that radical change is a pre-requisite to reconstruct schools and classrooms beyond western, Eurocentric beliefs and foundations. Radical humanism challenges the status quo and the ideological superstructures that structure society (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Dei, 2008; James 2019; Ramlackhan, 2020). My role in leading change includes facilitating courageous learning conversations and new initiatives; co-learning about bias, discrimination and human rights; and mentoring and guiding decision-making of school leaders. Through leadership grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), I continue to engage in personal reflection, learning, and interrogation of my own leadership practices in order to authentically support school leaders in doing the same. With direct responsibilities for equity and inclusive education, I am well-positioned to lead and implement organizational change in building school leaders' capacity and efficacy in addressing issues of anti-Black racism in schools and classrooms.

Leadership Lens (Theoretical and Experiential Approach)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) underpins both the theoretical approach and leadership lens in evaluating and addressing the PoP. The basic tenets of CRT provide guiding principles in committing to the goal of advancing cultural responsiveness and racial equity. These tenets are: 1) permanence of racism; 2) whiteness as property; 3) importance of counternarratives; 4) critique of liberalism; 5) interest convergence; and 6) intersectionality (Solorzano & Benal, 2001; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT leadership calls for the deconstruction of dominant white narratives that will help to shift the focus on social justice equity and culturally responsive school leadership that values the voice of those who have experienced discrimination (Amiot et

al., 2020; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Sleeter, 2017). Transformative learning is shifting one's worldview from being merit-based to a more collective awareness and ownership of the presence and impact of racism, white privilege, exclusionary cultures, and microaggressions in mainstream settings (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; Khalifa, 2021; Sanborn et al., 2021). In moving towards a more culturally responsive system that can bridge the equity gaps, requires deep consideration of the multiple ways that the system itself is marginalizing, and apply interventions that are validated by the diverse students and families being served (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; Lopez, 2016; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

My leadership style is a blend of social justice, culturally responsive, distributive leadership. As a culturally responsive leader, the focus is on the collective good that comes with greater racial equity through a clear vision and articulated goals that are derived directly from the Black community. In serving the diverse population of Ontario schools, improving student instruction through culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy must be at the core of educational reform if we are to truly impact the experiences and outcomes of marginalized students. Culturally responsive pedagogy must provide a path for students to maintain their cultural identity while succeeding academically (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Stembridge, 2020). This involves engagement in learning at the table with others, and listening to the concerns and needs of educators and leaders. These conversations will provide the necessary diagnostic assessment to meet educators and leaders where they are at and provide support, coaching and alternative strategies to create equitable classrooms and schools (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Lopez 2021). Beyond building a shared vision, leaders must build the individual and collective efficacy of staff to actively engage in the required behaviours to push goals forward and drive reform. In my personal experience, supporting teachers and school leaders in doing the hard work required with

any change initiative was more successful when efforts were made to build the personal agency in impacting student well-being and achievement.

Culturally responsive leadership encompasses change at all levels of the school and system, not just in terms of instructional practices (Ladson-Billings, 2009, 2021; Khalifa, 2016). Culturally responsive leaders work to develop and support the school staff to promote a safe and inclusive environment where marginalized students feel welcome, respected, and accepted for who they are (Ladson-Billings, 2009, 2021; Khalifa, 2016). Culture goes deeper than a surface understanding of ethnicity, race, etc., but rather it encompasses broader notions of difference reflected through the multiple social identities and ways of knowing that students bring to the classroom and their learning (Ladson-Billings, 2021; OME, 2013; Stembridge, 2020). In reaching Ontario's goals to ensure equity and achieve excellence, culturally responsive leaders must come forward to empower those who currently do not have a voice or say in their own education.

Through a community approach, shared leadership through capacity building of leaders and educators, along with the connection to a strong moral purpose, at all levels of the organization will be a key lever for change (Fullan, 2001; Dei 2008). "Leadership for learning" resonates with my personal belief that leaders are responding to multiple inputs, partners and considerations at all times, but must now be more aware of and in tune with marginalized voices. Effective change leaders are able to take in stimuli, input, and actively listen to the voices from the local school community, organizational system, and the social culture in order to respond in culturally relevant ways that consider both opportunities and constraints (Hallinger, 2011). In valuing the contributions of others across GDSB and working within a hierarchical system, I hope to open the opportunities for explicit and meaningful conversations about race,

discrimination, and necessary changes through collaborative working relationships that extend both vertically and horizontally throughout the organization. More specifically, I look for how leadership can be deeply informed and transformed by an African Indigenous knowledge and sense of community (Dei, 2019).

Leadership Problem of Practice

The leadership Problem of Practice (PoP) centers on GDSB's leadership development for equity, specifically building school leaders' capacity and self-efficacy in addressing anti-Black racism issues (e.g., racial inequity and disparity) within their schools. Just as supervisory officers guide and lead the professional development of school leaders, these principals and vice-principals are primarily responsible for guiding and shaping the learning environment for both students and staff at the meso-level. Leadership in equity requires critical self-reflection and deep consideration for the implications of their decision-making and actions within the school environment (Capper, 2019; Griffiths, 2013). School leaders and educators working face-to-face with students on a daily basis are in the front-line positions that can negatively or positively shift and impact how well-being and student success are framed for educators, and how situations involving racism, discrimination and inequity are handled. Starting at the top, GDSB supervisory officers must lead by example and engage in courageous conversations about race as well as and promote, guide, and actively participate in ongoing actions to push for racial equity at the all levels of the organization. The hard journey of critical self-reflection, self-directed learning, and a deep commitment to make the necessary changes by GDSB leadership, at all levels, is the foundational first step in the process in order to make lasting and impactful changes to our system.

Historical and long-standing anti-Black racism and systemic barriers within the education system are complex, multi-faceted, and multi-layered. Symptoms of systemic discrimination of Black students include colour-blind ideology and racism-neutral approaches (James & Turner, 2017; Kohli et al., 2017; Lopez, 2013), euro-centric curriculum that ignores diverse histories and perspectives (James & Turner, 2017; Doharty, 2019; Lopez, 2013), and over-discipline and harsher consequences of Black students over their peers (Caton, 2012; James & Turner, 2017; Lopez, 2013), overwhelming experiences of negative stereotyping and covert racism, and the overall lack of attention to and inappropriate handling of incidents of racism and discrimination (Hope et al., 2015; Lopez, 2013). More recently, the subjectivity and bias connected to the evaluation of learning skills and the troubling relationship between learning skills and academic streaming has also been brought into question (Parekh et al., 2018). GDSB is no exception to the well-documented inequities that have continued to surface within the public education sector. Despite efforts to acknowledge and address anti-Black racism, school boards in Ontario continue to display achievement gaps and negative outcomes for Black students. Some of the observable effects of anti-Black racism includes the widespread and shared feelings of isolation, lack of engagement and teacher-connection, streaming of Black students in courses below their academic ability, high push-out rates, and the over-representation of Black students in suspension and expulsion data (Dei, 2008; Doharty, 2019; James & Turner, 2017; Kohli et al., 2017). In building school leaders' capacity and self-efficacy in addressing racial equity, particularly for Black students, the leadership PoP must look closely at the key structures, learning approaches and strategies, and accountability measures that are required to monitor change.

The current gap exists within the hierarchical structure of education itself that has been designed and created to benefit and uphold the status quo. A more desirable state for GDSB is a culturally responsive school system that incorporates the beliefs and practices of the students and families we serve, while examining and addressing the power relationships and embedded barriers to service throughout the organization (Curry-Stevens, 2014). Using evidence-based approaches, GDSB system leaders must engage in their own critical reflection and learning, advocate for and model the change needed in coaching and mentoring conversations with school leaders. Building the equity leadership competencies of school leaders will help to develop culturally responsive educators who are committed to developing their cultural competence, hold high expectations for historically marginalized students, support the vision and goals to make a difference in the lives of Black students, use a constructivist approach in teaching and learning, and seek to know their students as individual learners (Brooks & Theoharis, 2019; OME, 2013).

Framing the Problem of Practice

Through the lens of CRT, the unique experiences of Black students are impacted by systemic barriers that continue to exist, discriminatory practices including colour-blind teacher and leader perceptions, low expectations and deficit thinking, over-discipline, and external blame factors (Amiot et al., 2020; Crosby et al., 2018; Gastic, 2017; Henry, 2019; Owens & McLanahan, 2019). Numerous studies and reports, including those based on Canadian schools, have found that Black students' viewed school discipline as arbitrary and disproportionately punitive (Bell, 2020; Codjoe, 2001; Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Dei, 2008; Ministry of the Solicitor General 2020). With the increasing attention and awareness of mental health and well-being, it is a well-known fact that when students are not well (e.g., feel physically and emotionally safe, welcome, and included), they cannot achieve to their fullest potential. Differential treatment of

Black students by teachers and administrators includes blaming Black culture for low achievement, with little or no encouragement to strive for high-level goals (Codjoe, 2001; Solozano & Yosso, 2002). Another layer to the challenge is the different perceptions of the racial realities which cause race-related tension and conflict (Finn & Servoss, 2015; Owens & McLanahan, 2019; Wong et al., 2014).

Due to systemic inequity and oppression, Black communities are disproportionally exposed to adversity, such as racism and community violence (Cronholm et al., 2015, Slopen et al., 2016). Exposure to adversity triggers the stress response system that can become toxic when events are frequent and protective factors are not in place (Bernard, 2002; Morsy & Rothstein, 2019; Theron, 2013). In schools, the lack of acknowledgement and attention given to Black students, how they internalize incidents of racism and discrimination, and the traumatic impact of these adverse experiences, can add to their feelings of alienation and "un-belonging" (Allen, 2015; Bargeman et al., 2020; Jernigan & Henderson, 2011; Solorzano & Yosso; 2002; Thompson & Farrell, 2019). The social stratifying nature of schools, where students are sorted by academic ability and excluded through discipline, has a direct influence on the trajectory of Black students and their future pathways and success (Allen, 2015, Gordon, 2016; Gregory & Roberts, 2017; Parekh et al., 2018). It is here, that it becomes clear that the societal barriers that the Black community faces due to racism and discrimination are continuations of the adverse experiences within the school system (Allen, 2015; Dei, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Understanding the deep wounds of racial trauma is critical in changing the approach to teaching, discipline, and creating schools that are truly safe and inclusive spaces that allow for healing and success for Black students and their families.

School boards, such as GDSB, are called upon to collect data, make necessary changes and be held accountable for the outcomes of historically marginalized students. The renewed vision for education in Ontario outlines four goals: 1) achieving excellence; 2) ensuring equity; 3) promoting well-being; and 4) enhancing public confidence (OME, 2014). Equity and excellence go hand in hand and the Ministry has recognized that by ensuring equity, achieving excellence is within reach for all students. The journey towards greater social justice and ensuring equity is a priority that ultimately leads to a stronger and better society for all of us (OME, 2014; Sanborn et al., 2021).

Macro-Level

The current education system founded on euro-centric views and curriculum that ignores diverse histories and perspectives (Brooks & Theoharis, 2019; Dei & James, 1998; Doharty, 2019), compounds the overwhelmingly negative reports of overt and covert racism experienced by Black students, and the overall lack of attention to, and the inappropriate handling of incidents of racism and discrimination (Hope et al., 2015; Turner, 2019). What can no longer be denied are the stories and experiences that Black students continue to voice and bring forward. These counter-narratives illustrate how whiteness as property dominates within the education system and acts as a barrier to success for those who do not have this race advantage. Despite efforts to acknowledge and address anti-Black racism, school boards in Ontario continue to display achievement gaps and negative outcomes for Black students. The urgency of the educational plight of Black students is underscored by repeated statistics of the 40% dropout rate of African Canadian students (James & Turner, 2017; Johnson, 2013). Some of the observable effects of anti-Black racism includes the widespread and shared feelings of isolation, lack of engagement and teacher-connection, streaming of Black students in courses

below their academic ability, high push-out rates, and the over-representation of Black students in suspension and expulsion data (James & Turner, 2017; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Harper & Davis, 2012; Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Sanders, 2022).

The presence of anti-Black racism in education is complex and deeply ingrained within the system itself. The words “disadvantaged”, “at risk”, “lack of parental support”, are often used to describe the situations of Black students that are based on assumptions and deficit-thinking that puts them at an immediate disadvantage (Dei, 1999; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Douglas et al., 2008). Further, the outright denial that racism is a social problem that exists as a dominant white narrative, creates a huge obstacle in addressing these issues. Diversity is one of Ontario’s greatest assets and the education system must be able to acknowledge, appreciate and respond to this gift in culturally appropriate ways. In order to do this, CRT would propose that the system must continue to name racism and white privilege to move racial equity forward in a meaningful and lasting way (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; DiAngelo, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Meso-Level

Green District School Board (GDSB) is a publicly funded school board that operates just outside of the main city. This small-sized organization serves over 20 000 students within 40 elementary and secondary schools. School leaders are essential to the development of teacher practice, enhanced student well-being and achievement, and the overall school improvement process. Using the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a foundation, school and system leaders utilize the five core leadership capacities to engage with partners as they manage daily administrative tasks and navigate more complex leadership mandates and challenges (OME, 2013). The five core leadership capacities include: 1) setting goals; 2) aligning resources with

priorities; 3) promoting collaborative learning cultures; 4) using data; and 5) engaging in courageous conversations (OME, 2013).

Along with every other school board across Ontario, GDSB has developed specific policies to guide and support the elimination of biases, barriers and power dynamics that lead to disproportionate outcomes for marginalized students (OME, 2017). In alignment with the OME goals and Ontario's ARA (2017), GDSB is working to identify, monitor and eliminate systemic barriers and discriminatory biases that impact student well-being and achievement. Demographic data collection has already begun in the 2019-2020 school year and will support the identification and monitoring of systemic barriers.

As a racialized system-leader with responsibility for equity and inclusive education, numerous experiences of racism and discrimination have been shared that align with provincial and local data. Some of the most powerful stories from students and families have been those specific to racial trauma, dismissal of concerns and issues brought forward, and the continued negative experiences that compound their feelings of isolation and rejection. The impact of the presence of anti-Black racism in GDSB can be seen in each of these individual students who are made to feel less-than their peers and are inadequately supported in order to achieve their full potential within a culturally relevant learning environment. This issue is sharply impacted by the lack of competency in leaders within the system to effectively acknowledge and address the concerns and issues being brought forward in a meaningful and committed way. The leadership gap adds to an environment of fear, immobilization (e.g., school leaders are too afraid to say or do anything), and internal pushback (e.g., reliance on past practice, colour-blind approaches) that essentially reinforces the existing status quo.

Micro-Level

With a firm grounding in CRT as the theoretical framework, the PoP centers on building the capacity and efficacy of GDSB's school-level leadership to address anti-Black racism issues within classrooms and schools. When school leaders are unsure of how to even engage in conversation about race, it circumvents any clear pathway to an appropriate and acceptable resolution to the concerns being brought forward. The impact of this uncertainty is that issues of anti-Black racism are often explained away through euro-centric views, dismissal of concerns, and the solutions are based on the deficit models that look to "fix" the student and their family. The PoP will address the need for explicit direction and advocacy in order to address and respond appropriately to racism and discrimination, and increase accountability of school leaders, teachers, and all staff working directly with students. A significant first step in addressing issues is a firm acknowledgement of what is being addressed and naming the problem.

GDSB's mission is to support and inspire each and every student to reach their full potential. In order to accomplish this goal, profound change is required in schools that will explore different learning models, strategies and practices (Dei, 2008; Griffiths, 2013; Khalifa, 2021). The desired and future state of GDSB schools are inclusive spaces that foster a deep sense of belonging for marginalized students, and deep learning is culturally relevant and responsive to the diversity of the student body. In order to feel included, students must see themselves reflected within their environment and learning, and feel that school staff care about who they are as individual and make ongoing efforts to know and understand who their full identities. Culturally responsive pedagogy demands the exploration and implementation of learning models and teaching strategies that are focused on creating positive experiences of Black students in

schools (Dei, 2008; Khalifa, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021). The core leadership capacity of engaging in courageous conversations intersects with the same being recognized as a key strategy in moving towards racial equity. These open and candid conversations about race must occur in order to challenge our own biases and assumptions, and stop discrimination (Khalifa, 2021; Lopez, 2013; Singleton, 2015).

Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice

The PoP centers on building the capacity and efficacy of GDSB's school-level leadership to address anti-Black racism issues within classrooms and schools. This is a multi-layered, complex problem that requires significant commitment on an individual level for successful change. Intentional actions on the part of school leaders must include self-directed learning about systemic racism and barriers that create inequity along racial lines, and the willingness to critically self-reflect and interrogate their own practices as essential players who have a significant impact on the opportunities and outcomes for Black students (Capper, 2019; Griffiths, 2013). A significant hurdle in making positive changes is the Black community's lack of trust in the current education system and the history of negative lived experiences that span across generations (James & Turner, 2017; Kohli et al., 2017; Lopez, 2013). Further, the deep layers of racial trauma, race-based traumatic stress, and the cognitive, affective, and physiological impact on individuals will need to be considered in providing safe places for healing and relationship-building (Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Sanders, 2022). Given the complex nature of the PoP and the lack of knowledge and efficacy of school leaders, it is essential that school leaders have a clear guide to frame their initial steps in moving forward in co-creating newly envisioned and inclusive learning spaces that are free from racism and discrimination. The

guiding questions that emerge about leadership capacity, relationship building and leading meaningful change are:

1. What knowledge and skills do school-level leaders need to engage in courageous conversations about race that ignite critical self-reflection and engagement in anti-racist work?
2. How will GDSB staff build relationships founded on trust with parents, guardians, and the Black community to authentically engage in a collaborative change process that centers the voice and experience of Black students and families?
3. How can system leaders develop and support the use of a clear road map to decolonize school culture and embed culturally responsive practices within everyday operations?

Articulating the necessary mindset and skills is the first starting point. Allowing the voices and lived experiences of Black students and their families is critical in both understanding the needs of the Black community, and as an essential starting point for healing and building trust. Question 1 speaks to the specific skills for equity leadership that school leaders need to develop. *How* school leaders engage partners, particularly those who are distrustful and wary of the education system will be equally important. The process of how change has traditionally happened in schools needs to be reviewed and looked at differently in order to center marginalized voices. As with many other aspects of education and change, relationships are key. Question 2 asks about a collaborative change process that includes Black families in an authentic and meaningful way. As a district, GDSB needs to think about how partners are currently engaged through a consultation process that occurs closer to the end of decision-making, and consider decolonized approaches that include partners from the start. Finally, question 3 looks at

the specific guidance school leaders need, and how they might adapt the process to meet the unique needs of their individual communities in moving forward.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

Leadership is defined within the OLF as the exercise of influence on internal and external partners (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). The OLF was designed to facilitate a shared vision of leadership across schools and systems, and provides guidance and direction for leaders to reflect on and grow in their use of effective evidence-based practices and actions that fuel the powerful link between leadership and improved student outcomes (IEL, 2013). This framework was revised from the original 2006 version due to changes in research, professional practice and the policy environment (IEL, 2013). Today, the framework is missing an intentional equity lens that must be embedded within every leadership action as we work towards common equity goals. In filling this gap in leadership competencies, the vision for change includes the collaborative development of a clear framework and guide for leaders to reference and inform their learning goals and strategies. Appendix B provides a summary of the key equity leadership competencies and considerations that must be incorporated into the OLF within each of the five pillars, in keeping with the emerging questions from the PoP.

The core equity leadership competencies will help to frame the capacity building of leaders and will work as a guide for developing the structure and content of what school leaders need to confidently address racism and discrimination within their schools. Clear actions will be developed through collaboration and learning so that school leaders can also work proactively to create more inclusive and safe spaces for Black students. Monitoring and evaluation of learning opportunities will be assessed through anonymous surveys and feedback that will also help

measure impact, enhance accountability, and inform the content and approaches for future learning.

Priorities and Change Drivers

GDSB's mission is to support and inspire each and every student to reach their full potential. In order to accomplish this goal, profound change is required in schools that will explore different learning models, strategies and practices (Lopez, 2013; Dei, 2008; Duncan, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016; Tuters & Portelli, 2016). With the global pandemic shining a spotlight on grave inequities, environmental crisis, deepening mistrust and world-wide trauma, it is perhaps the best time for reconstructing our education system and sustaining positive transformation (Fullan, 2021; Khalifa, 2013; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). Kotter's Eight Stage Process will provide the framework for change to address racial inequities for Black students (Odiaga et al., 2021).

The challenges that will be encountered include the lack of trust relationships with Black student and families, and the isolation of educators who advocate and champion racial equity in schools (Gorski, 2019). Keeping these challenges in mind, the planning process will need to be critically reflective, and it will be important to avoid what can be termed, "equity detours", such as moving at a slow pace and coddling hesitancies, that essentially damage the movement towards racial equity (Gorski, 2019). In planning for each stage, a number of factors will be considered including context, readiness, resources and supports needed, and communications. Three levels of approaches will be considered that pertain to the macro-, meso- and micro-levels. Macro-level considerations include bringing together diverse partners to collaborate and engage in conversations that incorporate marginalized voices and perspectives to articulate the problems, determine goals and solutions. A core consideration and change-driver

must be to build trust back with the Black community in such a way that prevents re-traumatization and provides spaces for healing, acknowledgement and success for Black students. Meso-level considerations will need to be grounded in a clear communications strategy that will build awareness and understanding across the district. Finally, micro-level considerations will include building the individual and collective capacity of staff to utilize skills and strategies that will positively impact school experiences for Black students and families. Table 1 outlines the change drivers and approaches that will connect to the implementation process for change.

Table 1

Considerations and drivers for change at macro-, meso- and micro-levels

Level	Change Drivers	Purpose/Framework for Progress (Meehan et al., 2009)
Macro (Broader Community)	▪ Authentic relationships ▪ Social intelligence	Bring people of different racial and ethnic groups to dismantle racial stereotypes Foster authentic collaboration based on trust in order to solve problems/conflicts and develop lasting solutions to the problem of practice
Meso (District)	▪ Shared vision and values ▪ Clearly articulated goals ▪ Quality district performance	Provide clear structure and direction through: ▪ Consistent and clear communication about the vision, strategy and steps for change (broad level organization and mobilization for change) ▪ Critical review of policies and procedures with an equity lens
Micro (Individual)	▪ Well-being and learning (Fullan, 2021) ▪ Student voice ▪ Capacity building ▪ Culturally responsive pedagogy	Build knowledge, awareness and skills of individuals to: 1. Increase awareness of culture, race, power dynamics and systemic barriers 2. Confront inequities, discrimination, and engage in courageous learning conversations

Micro-Level Priorities and Change Drivers

Starting at the micro-level, well-being is a pre-requisite to achievement. Well-being needs to drive school improvement in the sense that everyone is striving to create an

environment where all students feel a deep sense of belonging and safety at school. Students should feel good about themselves and the person they are becoming through positive values, engagement and meaningful, relevant learning opportunities (Dei, 2008; Fullan, 2021; OME 2013). Recognizing that the traditional education system has not worked, student voice and agency will be a key driver directing what needs to change in order to build greater intrinsic motivation that will lead to higher levels of student success. This student success is measured not solely through academic achievement but rather by more qualitative measures of feeling safe, valued and having a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in life (Fullan, 2021; Khalifa, 2013; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Prager, 2011). Through targeted learning for staff at all levels, a shared vision of dismantling systemic barriers and addressing discrimination, will frame the work needed in meeting the varied and unique needs of the diverse students in our classrooms and schools. Progress on staff engagement through learning opportunities, courageous conversations, and changes in school leader and teacher practices will be monitored through partner feedback surveys, informal conversations, and observations about Black student engagement, achievement and well-being within schools.

Meso-Level Priorities and Change Drivers

At the meso-level, the primary driver will be a shared vision of an inclusive and culturally responsive system. In fostering a more community-based approach to education, GDSB will want to build social trust and flatten the hierarchy of the system in order to create a safe and healthy environment that encourages risk-taking, advocacy and equity leadership. At the core of school leadership is the successful change results that come from the collective change of individuals' behaviours. This level of organizational change requires reflection, cognitive change, and is deeply emotional (Meyer & College, 2021). The level of trust that exists between

individuals and levels of the system will determine the degree to which authentic collaboration flourishes to support the needed change. Regular monitoring and check-ins will take place through monthly meetings with equity as a standing item on the agenda. Feedback and input from various board advisory and partner groups will support ongoing adjustments that are responsive to the needs of individuals and groups (within the school and broader community).

Macro-Level Priorities and Change Drivers

For the broader community at the macro-level, GDSB needs to rebuild public trust within the district through active engagement and collaboration with partners, particularly those from marginalized and under-served communities. With the rise of social movements and advocacy groups, we have seen an increase in advocates for Black students come forward to press for reform and ensure accountability for incidents of racism and discrimination. Examining and understanding the environmental forces that drive change at the macro-level is essential to change implementation (Deszca et al., 2020). Constant reflection through selected change models will support building authentic relationships that allows for responsive practice grounded in compassion and empathy to improve the system and give rise to the changes needed for a better, more inclusive system for Black students.

Throughout the change planning and implementation process, communication will be vital in ensuring that information is broadly shared and feedback is used to build a shared vision where partners see that their input informs the decision-making process. Clear and strategic communication is the fundamental ingredient in high-performing organizations (Barrett, 2002; Deszca et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019). The communication plan developed will inform and educate partners and motivate individuals to support the co-created strategic goals outlined. Regular updates and partner engagement will be intentionally embedded throughout the process. An

important element of communication will be in responding to those who have concerns, doubts, and pushback on the changes proposed. Successful implementation will require equal attention to support those who are on side with the strategy, and those who present obstacles and challenges. Engaging with individuals and groups opposed to an anti-Black racism strategy will be part of the courageous learning conversations that will support meaningful change that impacts the experiences and outcomes for Black students. Everyone is on a different place along the equity and cultural awareness continuum. Along the equity journey, courageous conversations about race are integral to acknowledging the barriers that Black students face, and understanding the role of educators and leaders in making a difference in the lives of marginalized students. Stages 5-8 of Kotter's process will require a continuous feedback loop through conversations, surveys, observations, etc. with all partner groups for the purpose of monitoring and informing next steps and revisions in the process.

Organizational Change Readiness

Organizational change is always challenging and difficult despite the cause and valid reasons that may be present for the change initiative. There are numerous players and factors that must be considered within any organization when assessing the readiness for change. This involves many complex and dynamic processes that are intertwined and impact one another in multiple ways (Deszca et al., 2020). Being a dynamic and evolving system, change in any one area will inevitably impact the other interconnected levers. As a result, many of these elements must be considered both independently and in conjunction with one another for successful change implementation. The careful analysis of the varied implications will ultimately help to support alignment between any change initiative and the key organizational goals and vision (Deszca et al., 2020). One of the challenges for GDSB, is the obvious diversity gap in the

workforce, and the multiple barriers to overcome, including some unwillingness to accept the issues that are faced by Black students in schools.

GDSB has made intentional efforts to engage partners, both internal and external, in conversation in order to listen and respond appropriately to the concerns of the Black community. GDSB has engaged with partner groups, including the Black community, to hear and understand the perspectives and lived experiences directly connected to schools in the district. The direct input and voice of Black students and their families has fueled the need to address issues of anti-Black racism a priority for the district [GDSB Equity Strategy]. GDSB is in a position to consolidate the stories shared in trust to enact change through strategic planning and communication. From early engagement sessions, it was clear that individuals were at various points with respect to their level of understanding of systemic discrimination, and more importantly, there was a wide discrepancy in their belief and commitment to racial equity. Not surprisingly, the individuals and groups who oppose anti-racism initiatives come from both internal and external sources. Although the direct cause of internal pushback may not be known (e.g., disagreement, fear, uncertainty about the issues), the resistance exists and is evident at all levels of the organization. External partners seem to be far more vocal in their opposition whereas internally, the silence and inaction speaks to the power of whiteness in the system. The next steps include co-developing key messages with partners, and making a commitment to continue planning for authentic opportunities for input, monitoring and evaluation. The resistance encountered at every step, is a constant reminder of the work that needs to be done, and the unwavering commitment that is crucial to making impactful changes towards racial equity and justice within the education system.

Data sources, including a recent workforce and student census will help to inform decisions about goals and strategies, that target education outcomes for Black students. Based on initial recommendations derived from the data, is ready to co-create an equity strategy with partners that will hopefully result in an increase in the diversity within the GDSB workforce and increased positive outcomes for Black students. Ongoing analysis of achievement, attendance, graduation, suspension and expulsion rates will be essential in monitoring and evaluation moving forward. It is clear that learning about systemic discrimination, barriers, anti-blackness, and anti-Black racism will be essential components of any equity strategy. Research and practice both show that conversations about race are not comfortable and are often avoided (Lopez, 2013; Singleton, 2018). Knowing that the concerns of Black students and their families line up with all other research, including Ontario-specific statistic, it is a moral imperative that the courageous conversations, however uncomfortable, must begin. Although these conversations may be extremely challenging at first, they will lead to greater efficacy, on an individual and collective level, to challenge systemic barriers and discrimination within school and the broader district. Appendix D further outlines the "why" behind the change and the next steps for GDSB.

The Name, Own, Frame, and Sustain (NOFS) model directly supports individuals' movement along the social justice continuum (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). This model starts with being able to name anti-Black racism and blackness within education and society, as the essential pre-requisite to owning the emotional work of challenging the status quo and dismantling the barriers that exist. In alignment with both the OLF and Kotter's Change Model, successful change starts with a shared vision and developing the organizations to support desired practices (IEL, 2013; Odiaga et al., 2021). One of the most important questions that can lead to developing agency and inspiring action is *why*? The time spent in developing a clear vision and

rationale for change will go a long way in sustaining the efforts along the way and continuing the work long after change implementation. The collaboration with partners will be essential as individual and group motives and interests must be taken into account at the very early stages to develop shared goals that are important and meaningful for those who will be impacted (Deszca et al., 2020).

GDSB is at the very early stages of organizational readiness for change as there has been some time and intentional strategic actions focused on building awareness and developing a shared vision with partners. As GDSB moves to implement change to address the inequities for Black students, partners should continue to be engaged moving forward. This approach will strengthen the move forward to make meaningful changes in the learning environment, instructional strategies, approach to discipline, and sense of well-being and belonging for Black students. The success of this change initiative will be largely dependent on a well-laid out communications strategy. By following a clear implementation plan grounded by research and fueled by partner voice and engagement, there is true hope for lasting change that will better serve Black students.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

This chapter will discuss a hybrid approach, combining social justice, culturally responsive, and distributive leadership, that centers the work of equity and social justice to support learning and capacity building of school leaders in addressing anti-Black racism issues within their schools. The current rise of social consciousness calls for leaders who can play a key role in dismantling systemic racism, white supremacy, and the structures and policies that continue to perpetuate marginalization (Andreotti, 2021; Lopez, 2020; Khalifa, 2018). In leading change within the education system to provide equitable and culturally responsive education for Black students, four alternate solutions will be reviewed through an analysis of factors including resources, benefits, consequences, and challenges to the change process. The most appropriate solution for the current context will be connected back to the ethical responsibilities and commitments of GDSB.

The board leadership team sets the direction of the school district and continuously develops the capacity of staff, in various roles, to work towards shared goals in meeting the needs of all students, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. This work typically involves the professional development of senior management and school leaders, district leadership (e.g., consultants, resource teachers) and educators. The responsibilities of leadership in the board includes establishing a broadly shared vision, and providing evidence-based instructional and operational guidance to improve the teaching and learning cycle (IEL, 2013). Now more than ever, equity is at the fore-front of the education agenda, and it is imperative that educators and leaders understand and make decisions through an equity lens, that requires intentional consideration and reflection on anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice. While the education system points to inadequate academic performance and lack of family

support for the low academic achievement of Black students (Dei, 2003; Dei 2008; Douglas et al., 2008; Gosa & Alexander, 2007; Kaiser et al., 2017), Black students and parents/guardians report that they are often made to feel inadequate or unwelcome due to limited information being shared and low levels of self-efficacy (Anderson et al., 2017; Griffith et al., 2019). The clear disjoint between the school and family perspective is viewed through the lens of CRT, to articulate and pinpoint the ways in which the education system is unresponsive and dismissive of the experiences of Black students. Further, the increased mental health needs of our students, staff and families underscores the importance of well-being, belonging, and emotional safety as a pre-requisite to learning. The intersectionality of mental health issues and other inequities such as racialization and poverty creates unique challenges and disproportionately impacts the Black community (Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, 2014; Griffith et al., 2019).

Leadership Approaches to Change

The PoP focuses on the gap in equity leadership of school leaders and their efficacy demonstrated through intentional actions to address anti-Black racism issues. Broadly, equity leadership referred to here will encompass leadership actions that actively engage in advancing human rights and working to eliminate all forms of marginalization in education. School leaders need to individually and collectively recognize the permanence of racism within the broader context of society, and apply this knowledge, awareness, and understanding in applying direct interventions and changes in practice that challenge the status quo. The necessary changes in areas like curriculum, pedagogy and classroom resources will only come with a newly imagined system emerging from decolonization (Andreotti, 2021; Lopez, 2020).

Social Justice Leadership

Social justice leadership centers on the concern for situations of marginalization on the basis of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other conditions of inequity, and more importantly, the commitment to equity and justice (Theoharis, 2007). Within the arena of social justice in education, leading by example calls for courageous first steps, often in the face of a politically divided climate and resistance to change. A key goal of the Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is to move from blindly supporting oppression to actively confronting it at all levels of the organization. The historical marginalization of Black students has been well documented in research since the 1960s and the challenges associated with education continue to be the same today (Dei, 2008; Henry 2019). This history also parallels the need for leaders in education who are aware of and well-equipped with community perspectives, anti-racist and anti-discriminatory stances, and the efficacy to address issues of anti-Black racism head on. A mind shift is required where social justice is not about a choice and idealistic concept but rather an intentional series of actions that connect social justice to common teaching and learning approaches and practices within the classroom and school (Bogotch, 2015). The development of school leadership must prepare principals and vice-principals to actively and confidently engage with the resistance in deconstructing race within education and breaking down the systemic barriers that exist (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Adams et al. (1997) outlined a social justice action continuum that identifies eight discrete points of action that aligns with building equitable leaders who will champion the rights of marginalized Black students within the education system. This continuum is relevant today because the issues and gaps in leadership at the surface, appear to be the same. It provides a curriculum for equity learning and prescribes the necessary actions that must be taken by leaders

and individual members of the organization to make a difference in the lives of Black students by addressing issues including low expectations, over-discipline, push-out statistics (James & Turner, 2017; Harper & Davis, 2012; Ruck & Wortley, 2002). Table 2 shows the continuum of social justice identity development that parallels the equity journey that leaders and educators are on to address the current issues that are being brought to the forefront in education and society at large.

In moving school leaders on the continuum towards "confronting oppression", the leadership approach to change is one that is founded on courageous conversations about race openly within educational spaces in order to address the role that race plays in sustaining and widening achievement gaps (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Singleton, 2015). This is a conversation that all educators and leaders must engage in for them to see the roots of the problem and start to address them through intentional actions. These actions include broader structural changes such as examining policies for barriers and discrimination to building the cultural competence of an organization. The tensions that are often encountered when trying to even initiate such conversations calls for a mentoring approach that is a powerful force in shaping the quality of teaching and the experiences of diverse students (Theoharis, 2007; Lopez, 2013). It is important to acknowledge the emotional and professional risk of participants engaging in courageous conversations, and understand that the creation of safe spaces where meaningful dialogue can occur is paramount (Lopez, 2013; Singleton, 2018).

Table 2

Continuum of Social Justice Identity Development

Supporting Oppression	
Stage	**Description**
1. Actively participating	Telling oppressive jokes, putting people down from target groups, intentionally avoiding marginalized individuals, discriminating against these individuals or physically harassing these individuals.
2. Denying	Individuals enable oppression by denying that target members are oppressed. These individuals do not actively oppress but, by denying that oppression exists, collude with oppression.
3. Recognizing, no action	Individuals are aware of oppressive actions and their harmful effects, but take no action to stop this behaviour. This inaction is due to fear, lack of information, or confusion about what to do. These individuals experience discomfort at the contradictions between awareness and action.
4. Recognizing, action	An individual is aware of oppression, recognizes oppressive actions of self and others, and takes action to stop it.
5. Educating self	When individuals seek to educate themselves about oppression and target group members.
6. Educating others	When individuals seek to not only educate themselves but to also educate others.
7. Supporting, encouraging	Individuals support others who are working against oppression and join a coalition or allies group as examples.
8. Initiating, preventing	The individual takes even more action and works to change individual and institutional actions and policies that discriminate against target group members, and plan educational programs and other events, work on policies, and being explicit about making target group members full participants in organizations or groups.
Confronting Oppression	

Note: Adams M., Bell, L., & Griffin, P. (1997). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook*. New York.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Within the current provincial and global landscape, it is evident that socially-responsible behaviour and an ethical approach to change is becoming more important (Burnes, 2009; Hill & Stevens, 2017; Lopez 2016; Khalifa, 2021). Culturally relevant pedagogies that advance the perspectives and narratives of those who have been on the margins, are useful in interrupting oppression that can operate silently within organizations (Chunoo et al., 2019). Culturally responsive leadership advocates for educational spaces that allow students to be their authentic selves and be welcomed within a learning environment that reflects who they are while at the same time allowing them to flourish and grow to their fullest potential (Khalifa, 2021).

Part of the change needed in addressing anti-Black racism in education will only come when educational leaders and educators move beyond awareness and complicity, and are able to understand and restructure their perceptions and change their behaviour on their own accord (Adams et al., 1997; Burnes, 2009, Lopez, 2020). Culturally responsive leadership challenges leaders to rethink old ways of doing things and highlights the essential need for unlearning practices that have not worked, especially for marginalized groups and learning new community perspectives and approaches (Lopez, 2016, Khalifa, 2021).

This type of leadership requires individuals to critically examine and interrogate their own lives and experiences through liberatory pedagogy (Chunoo et al., 2019). There is an inherent ethical responsibility to engage in ongoing unlearning and reflection to make intentional space to truly listen to the stories of historically marginalized individuals and groups. Racism is a systemic problem that operates at the internal, interpersonal, institutional, cultural and structural level to benefit the dominant group (Curry & Stevens, 2017). Liberatory pedagogy empowers leaders to make the shift from dominant hegemony and whiteness to the sharing of collective experiences and feelings as the 'true' source of understanding what shapes people's lives (Chunoo et al., 2019). Anti-Black racism is one of the "isms" that operates without detection in many cases and the work of eradicating cannot begin until it is named and recognized as a systemic problem. Using a human-centered approach, school leaders must recognize that in order to successfully address racial disparity in schools, they must work collaboratively with their community on an ongoing basis (Wallace, 2020).

Distributive Leadership

Distributive leadership aligns with and supports the vision of a newly altered education system that breaks through long-standing barriers to equity and challenges the hierarchical

structure. If leadership is based on influence, rather than direct power, the leadership within schools that reside with many formal and informal sources needs to be recognized (Harris, 2014). This type of leadership involves a continuous flow of interactions across the organization rather than simply flowing from the top of the hierarchy or from a formal leadership team (European Policy Network on School Leadership, 2010). The diversity that exists within student populations and the broader community and society are assets that should be brought forward in creating a more inclusive and equitable school system that benefits society as a whole. By valuing the contributions coming from both internal and external community members, distributive leadership lends itself to improved organizational effectiveness (EPNoSL, 2010). Effective distributive leadership requires intentional planning and requires high levels of trust, transparency, and mutual respect (Harris, 2014).

With a clearly defined and shared goal to address anti-Black racism in classrooms and schools, distributive leadership approaches promote greater participation and can help to effectively identify and meet the local needs of marginalized students, while empowering all partners to be more actively engaged with change in the daily operation of their school (EPNoSL, 2010). There is a deeper need for collective responsibility for the well-being and success of students by widening the leadership paradigm and providing opportunities for diverse perspectives within a culture of mentoring and trust (Aczel et al., 2017). Working towards the achievement of racial equity in classrooms and schools is deepened by shifting participation and democratic decision-making beyond the school walls and intentionally including disadvantaged groups into the conversation. Deep change like this involves a complex dynamic of personal, contextual, and socially defined influences (Kim, 2020). A key consideration in truly moving towards greater racial equity will be prioritizing open, respectful and honest dialogue with the

goal of learning and understanding diverse perspectives and hearing stories from marginalized students with an open mind.

A Blended Leadership Approach

The three approaches of social justice, culturally responsive, and distributive leadership will collectively support key actions to further racial equity in schools. Social justice leadership underlines the *why* of equity work where the preferred vision of schools are places where communities engage to better the lives of marginalized individuals and groups through meaningful and critical learning about real-world issues and how we can mobilize to make impactful changes for the betterment of our local community, and possibly beyond those boundaries. Culturally responsive leadership identifies *what* leadership actions are needed to challenge the status quo and the accepted ways of doing things that ultimately present barriers to change. This type of leadership behooves us to center the voices at the margins, and more importantly, acknowledge and validate their experiences by adopting different approaches to schooling and what we understand teaching to be. Finally, distributive leadership frames *how* we can start the process of decolonization by recognizing the knowledge and expertise that lies within all levels of the organization and amongst the community as a whole. The journey towards racial equity will require many hands over many years, and the longevity of this work requires committed partnerships that distributive leadership centers.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

The urgency of developing leadership capacity and efficacy to address anti-Black racism in education must be addressed through an organized framework for change to successfully move towards greater racial equity. This framework must embed a foundational lens of decolonization, anti-racism and anti-discrimination, while incorporating the various aspects of

successful change implementation. Intentional time and dedicated focus on building school leaders' capacity in this area will drive the anti-racism agenda forward. Leading change to interrupt oppression within the education system also requires a commitment to culturally relevant pedagogies and an asset-oriented lens towards communities and their stories (Chunoo et al., 2019, Lopez 2016). A clear framework will help articulate the change required analysis of the organizational readiness for change and the ideal path to achieve the solutions and strategies desired. The framework presented here will be a hybrid of the Name, Own, Frame, and Sustain (NOFS) framework and Kotter's Eight Stage Process (XLR8). The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model will cycle through at each stage as a means of intentionally embedded reflection and ongoing communication with partners throughout all stages of implementation and the work to disrupt anti-Black racism. Each model will be briefly discussed below and rationale for a hybrid approach will be articulated. The use of a hybrid model will also help to mitigate for some of the limitations within each of the specific models and provide a clearer structure to focus intentionally on the work to dismantle systems of oppression and anti-Black racism.

Name, Own, Frame, and Sustain (NOFS) Framework

Prioritizing Lopez's NOFS framework for action, which supports the movement across the continuum of social justice identity development, will help center the accountability to ethics and social justice (Adams et al., 1997; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). The intentional naming and owning the issues of anti-Black racism are foundational to addressing and dismantling this embedded structure within educational institutions. Continuing to communicate and build a shared vision throughout the change process will be essential to inviting and engaging school leaders to critically reflect on their own beliefs, biases, pedagogy, and practices in order to impact the Black student experience and address the areas of marginalization. Courageous

conversations are the starting point from which the racism and discrimination faced by Black students can be named directly in order to humanize and place the problem itself within our schools. This must be the starting point of the work to change a system that has marginalized and under-served the Black community. One of the limitations of the NOFS is that depending on the self-awareness and disposition of the individual, there can barriers to recognizing and acknowledging the presence of anti-Black racism within classrooms and schools. The PDSA cycle that will be embedded at each of the stages, particularly in the engagement of Black community partners, will help to ensure that their voices are centered and continuously active in all steps of planning and monitoring.

Kotter's Eight Stage Process (XLR8)

Kotter's Eight Stage Process (XLR8) provides a highly structured approach that works through prescribed stages of completion (Deszca et al., 2020). The stages are to: 1) establish a sense of urgency; 2) create a guiding coalition; 3) develop a vision and strategy; 4) communicate; 5) empower employees; 6) generate short-term wins; 7) consolidate gains and produce more change; and 8) anchor new approaches. Kotter's framework outlines the linear steps for leaders to follow to gain understanding about when and how they can ensure organizational readiness to move on to the next stage (Deszca et al., 2020; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The stages prescribed in Kotter's model also expand on what needs to happen in order to build a shared understanding and vision first, as it relates to addressing how anti-Black racism operates in the system. It will also be incorporated into the hybrid framework for leading the change process as it aligns more clearly and provides specific stages that deal with the various aspects that need to be addressed within the PoP.

The initial stages emphasize building a shared understanding of the district's purpose and shared vision, and raise the consciousness of leaders to issues of racial equity (Richmond & Allison, 2003). The components involved in establishing a sense of urgency will be the first building blocks to support the journey towards greater equity across classrooms and schools for Black students. Fostering relationships based on trust and collaboration will be essential in creating the right circumstances for leaders to be self-reflective, take risks and authentically collaborate in order to create more equitable spaces (Houchens & Keedy, 2009; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Through the change implementation, relationship building and transparent communication will be a core component of each and every stage. At every stage of the process, change leaders and partners need to be cognizant of the racial trauma that exists within the Black community and proceed with a trauma-informed lens and great sensitivity for individuals as this work evolves.

Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) Model

GDSB uses a continuous learning model to guide school improvement. The most common framework used to guide change is the PDSA cycle that collects and analyses data throughout the learning process and helps to empower those directly engaged with the process make meaningful changes for improvement (Cleary, 1995, 2015). The core elements that frame the professional development of educators and other staff are job-embedded learning where participants are actively engaged with students, continuous learning opportunities for staff at all levels, aiming to break down siloes and increasing collaboration (Evans et al., 2012). Within education, the first stage of this framework that looks at defining the system would include understanding and knowing the students and families that are being served. To effectively do this, leaders must actively model outreach and relationship building. One of the more

challenging elements of this model as it relates to the PoP is eliminating fear, as there are risks associated with advocating for and engaging in equity work is fear and uncertainty (Lopez, 2013). Fear of saying the wrong thing or making mistakes, fear of lacking knowledge/expertise, fear of making reprisals for pushing back against the status quo. Knowing that successful organizational change is dependent upon the collective change of individuals, inter-group and group behaviours, it is essential to address and support school leaders in building their overall efficacy in equity leadership (Meehan et al., 2009; Meyer & College, 2021).

A Hybrid Framework for Leading the Change Process

Through the lens of decolonization and anti-racism, a hybrid framework for leading the change process is needed to ensure a change process that incorporates intentional inclusion of marginalized voices, distribution of power, and ongoing critical reflection to promote anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practices. The purpose of the framework is to incorporate the core values within the social justice, culturally responsive, and distributive leadership aiming to integrate and provide a more holistic framework. Starting with PDSA, the continuous and reflective evaluation throughout the process will be important. The importance of hearing and listening to the voices of marginalized students and families will be key in evaluating and adjusting strategies along the way. Throughout the change process, there will be numerous cycles of PDSA happening as each step is reflected on and adjusted based on partner engagement. Kotter's Eight Stage Process provides a clear path and structure towards achieving change goals. This clarity and structure will help to keep the strategies and implementation on track, particularly as barriers and distractions will inevitably present themselves. Based on Kotter's model, it will be important to highlight short-term wins as a strategy for maintaining motivation and hope for change. Finally,

the layer of NOFS ensures that the focus remains on the steps needed to address and eliminate the specific structures and realities around anti-Black racism in education.

The foundation of the NOFS model will root keep the focus on dismantling anti-Black racism, particularly when facing barriers and obstacles as a result of challenging the status quo. The clear stages of XLR8 provides a clear direction of the steps that are needed to support clear communication to the district and partners about what the work will involve and look like, while the PDSA cycle will necessitate ongoing engagement with all partners and the need for critical reflection, both from the individuals involved, and from a system-perspective that must take into account the overall movement towards a re-imagined state. As illustrated in Table 3, there are parallels and connections between the XLR8 and NOFS models which will also prove to be useful in the monitoring, assessment and determining next steps within the change implementation process. At the end of each stage of the combined models, the PDSA will be an important ongoing cycle to ensure that critical reflection is continuing at points during planning and implementation. Combining these models solidifies a focus on the ultimate goal of dismantling anti-Black racism, while providing the necessary structure and clearly outlined steps for strategic implementation for successful change implementation.

Table 3

Connections between NOFS, XLR8, and PDSA models

<table>
<tr><th>Name, Own, Frame, Sustain (NOFS)
(Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)</th><th>Kotter's Eight Stage Process (XLR8)
(Kotter, 2012)</th><th>Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Model</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Name
• Understanding and conceptualizing anti-blackness and anti-Black racism everyday schooling practices</td><td>1. Establish a sense of urgency</td><td rowspan="8">Note: The PDSA reflection cycle should occur throughout and between stages to ensure a constant feedback loop with partners

Plan
• Describe objective and proposed change, action steps
• Define plan for collecting data

Do
• Implement the plan
• Collect data

Study
• Analyze data and summarize what has been learned

Act
• Determine next steps
• Make changes and start another cycle</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. Create a guiding coalition</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Develop a vision and strategy</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Own
• Educators position themselves to examine their silence and complicity and that of others; claim responsibility for agency and change
Frame
• Intentional and purposeful actions</td><td>4. Communicate the change vision</td></tr>
<tr><td>5. Empower employees for broad-based action</td></tr>
<tr><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Study
• Analyze data and summarize what has been learned</td><td>6. Generate short term wins</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Sustain
• Collective, ongoing effort to see how we are being unjust; intentional changes</td><td>7. Consolidate gains and produce more gains</td></tr>
<tr><td>8. Anchor new approaches in culture</td></tr>
</table>

Critical Organizational Analysis

Developing school leaders who are poised and ready to tackle the complex and layered issues connected to anti-Black racism in education involves deep change on an individual, local (i.e., school) and organizational level. The changes needed within GDSB to better serve Black students, answer the guiding questions of the OIP and specify the key actions that will support successful and meaningful change. As a reminder, the guiding questions for the OIP are: 1) What knowledge and skills do school-level leaders need to engage in courageous conversations about race that ignite critical self-reflection and engagement in anti-racist work?; 2) How do we build relationships founded on trust with parents, guardians, and the Black community to authentically

engage in a collaborative change process that centers the voice and experience of Black students and families?; and 3) How can school leaders develop and support the use of a clear road map to decolonize school culture and embed culturally responsive practices within everyday operations?

In considering the overall organizational improvement plan, analyzing GDSB's current state and determining the level of change readiness will inform the solutions and strategies, along with the starting point for the implementation plan. Organizational change readiness can be evaluated through a self-assessment that helps leadership answer essential questions that demonstrate or provide evidence of an organization's strengths and areas for improvement (Ford & Evans, 2002). Change readiness is a multidimensional construct that is directly influenced by staff beliefs about change-specific efficacy, appropriateness of the proposed change, management support, and personal valence (Holt et al., 2007). Ultimately, completing a change readiness assessment will highlight some of the gaps between the expectations of leaders and other members (Holt et al., 2007). Careful consideration of these gaps will inform the initial steps required for system alignment and the starting point for successful change. For a fulsome assessment, change leaders must also consider and seek to understand the complex internal and external factors that underpin the situation that we are faced with today (Deszca et al., 2020). The urgency of dismantling systemic barriers and demands for greater accountability within the education system necessitates school leaders share power across the organization to build solidarity towards racial equity (Mayfield, 2020, Shah, n.d.)

GDSB's initial baseline was assessed using a readiness-for-change questionnaire that examined six readiness dimensions of previous change experiences, executive support, credible leadership and change champions, openness to change, rewards for change, and measures for change and accountability were examined to inform both the potential strategies and

implementation plan (Deszca et al., 2020). Appendix C provides a summary of the initial baseline assessment completed using Deszca et al.'s tool for rating the organization's change readiness, and the scores associated with each of the dimensions discussed below. With a score of 10, GDSB is at the lower end of the readiness scale, however, the analysis would indicate that there is some level of readiness, and there are ample reasons to push forward while supporting learning needs along the way. GDSB's readiness for change in terms of the final score will be summarized after looking at each of the change dimensions.

Previous Change Experiences

This change dimension looks at the organization's past experiences and the current environment, specifically the behavioural attitudes towards change within the organization. Generally speaking, GDSB has adapted to change in a moderate way with a balance of positive and negative experiences over time. It would be difficult to speak about all individual members' perceptions and experiences, knowing that some level of conflict between leaders and other members, as well as between and within various groups will inevitably occur (Holt et al., 2007).

The ongoing impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic cannot be overlooked in the assessment of the "mood" of GDSB. The pandemic has left no one untouched and society at large have seen how trauma, stress, boredom, and inactivity have affected our cognitive functioning and perpetuated psychological distress and chronic stress (Quinn et al., 2021). GDSB staff have not been immune to ever-changing expectations and protocols related to health and safety measures, adapting to remote and virtual learning, while managing personal and family-related issues that have all been compounded by the current circumstances. Although, the experiences with change have been relatively positive, the past three years managing life with COVID-19 has made recent experiences far more negative. The overall score in the area of

"previous change experiences" must be considered in light of the current pandemic along with other change experiences in general that the district has undergone. Awareness of these factors will be important in strategic planning around communication and implementation to build a common understanding of the vision and purpose for change.

Executive Support

In the dimension of executive support, GDSB scored on the lower range on all four questions probing into senior management involvement, vision, and support for the change initiative. As a hierarchical system with many moving parts that are delineated within long-standing departments, the organization is siloed in many ways and what is being done in one area may not always be fully communicated and understood by other members, even at the same level. Again, due to the ongoing pandemic, there is a lack of clarity about the future and making concrete decisions and steps beyond the immediate time frame has been challenging. The lack of support from senior managers may be explained due to leadership capacity and awareness, and the necessary attention given to the immediate priorities connected to health and safety that have moved leadership away from strategic planning and improvement goals in general. Focused capacity building for system leaders will be an essential component to guide and support the needed changes at the classroom and school level. Although the PoP centers on school leadership, the support networks and human resources that all work in service of students must be equally informed and competent in the area of racial equity. The learning plan that is designed must reach all departments and key roles for impactful and meaningful steps towards the needed changes.

Credible Leadership and Change Champions

Scores in relation to credible leadership and change champions was in the mid-range across the six specific questions assessed. The senior leaders have undergone some team composition changes shortly before the start of the pandemic. Although there is general organizational trust, the newness of the team and reduced opportunities for face-to-face contact may impact the level of trust within the organization. From the lens of equity, there are certainly many champions across and within the organization who believe in and advocate for change to address anti-Black racism and other systemic issues that lead to inequities for students and their families. This change dimension can be seen as one of the strengths of GDSB in the sense that there has been some awareness and capacity building to support this change vision already. One of the gaps would be in the capacity and efficacy of each of the senior leaders in leading anti-racism work through proactive modelling. In developing the change readiness of GDSB further, attention must be placed on alignment between the vision and supportive leadership and structures (Deszca et al., 2020). In building credible change champions, the learning must be structured to meet individuals where they are at, but also requires a solid commitment to some level of self-directed learning in areas of cultural competence and anti-Black racism.

Openness to Change

This dimension assessed the internal environment and the willingness of individual members, within the existing culture, to want to move towards change. From a lens of decolonization, “turf” protection is a substantial issue in addressing necessary system changes, that present significant barriers to imagining a completely new education system. Working within an organization that is part of a broader regional and national system (Van Lancker et al., 2016) strongly rooted in coloniality, meaningful change will require significant work in building

a shared vision that essentially involves a shift in culture. Some of conflicts and barriers may include the denial of historical and ongoing systemic discrimination and the magnitude and depth of the layered problems that must be faced together (Andreotti, 2021; Khalifa et al., 2016; Turner, 2019). Education is a field where individuals may not want to "rock the boat" and this can lead to smoothing over conflict rather than dealing with it openly with a focus on addressing the issue for the long term. An opportunity here is working towards a culture that embraces diverse innovation actors in developing complex radical innovations within a complex system with multiple partners (Van Lancker et al., 2016). The consistent provision of the space for courageous conversations during meetings, in discussing new situations arising in schools, etc. will be critical in shifting the current culture, and spotlighting the importance of dialogue in moving forward in a concrete way to address issues of racism and discrimination.

Rewards for Change

This change dimension looks at the intrinsic and external motivators for change within an organization. Elaborating further on the previous section on the openness for change and the opportunity to create a more innovative culture, the rewards for change can be viewed at a more surface level. Deeper changes that disrupt the current status quo and systemic structures do not have a highly positive reward structure given the work that this type of change involves. The evolved concept of restorative justice as an abiding concern for relationships and belonging, and the cultivation of personal healing and attention to structural harm (Stauffer & Turner, 2019), shifts the idea of rewards that center on community and the betterment of society as a whole. Raising the level of social consciousness and deepening the connection with people (Stauffer & Turner, 2019) will provide both intrinsic and external motivators, and these rewards will be experienced through short-term and long-term results. In moving towards the desired state of

racial equity in schools, GDSB's efforts to increase staff awareness and understanding of the impact of anti-Black racism on the well-being and success of Black students as well as the negative impact on the community as a whole will hopefully spark the intrinsic motivation to actively engage in equity work, both as a learner and as a key member who directly impacts the experiences of Black students.

Measures for Change and Accountability

In the change dimension of measures for change and accountability, GDSB scored on the lower range. GDSB is working towards utilizing race-based data collected for both staff and students in a more meaningful and intentional way to inform strategies and monitor change initiatives. These statistics will indicate the nature and severity of the problems and hold the organization accountable for addressing the issues and defining the collective responsibility of all partners in creating a better, new system (Dei, 2008). In education, the customers are the students and families. There is a need to develop more consistent measurement tool that engages students, families and other partners in ongoing conversations and evaluation opportunities in order to include the voices of all partners, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. Dismantling systemic barriers to racial equity requires individuals and organization to walk alongside the community in solidarity to challenge the barriers, including race, gender, socio-economic status, etc. and name the structural violence that has perpetuated deeply embedded inequities (Stauffer & Turner, 2019). Concrete tools and measures will need to be developed in order to assess the appropriateness of training and to ensure accountability that meaningful changes are being implemented and evaluated.

Summary

In summary, in relation to the readiness for change questionnaire used to assess the initial base line, GDSB scored 10 points which indicates some level of preparedness to successfully engage in change implementation. However, this is the minimum score that would indicate any level of change readiness, so there is a lot of work to do in strengthening GDSB within the various dimensions. The hybrid framework for leading the change process starts with the planning stage and clear visioning for the organization. Shared understanding and conceptualization of anti-blackness and anti-Black racism will be a significant goal that must be tackled head on (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Based on the assessment, it is clear that a substantial amount of time will need to go into the initial planning stage where the priority will be placed on the vision itself and developing a strategy in collaboration with all partners (Kotter, 2012). The next section will describe the key changes needed for GDSB to move towards racial equity in schools and across the district.

Change 1: A Shift in Culture

One of the key changes needed is a culture shift that embraces openness to new learning in front of students, colleagues and families. This challenges leaders to be vulnerable and would position them to be able to listen to voices that have been left out of the discourse in education and critically examine whose knowledge is valued in our system that perpetuates coloniality (Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2021). Brown (2018) connects vulnerability to courage, and in fact, sees them as originating from the same place. Adaptability, courageous conversations, and ethical decision making are just a few of the qualities and skills that underpin daring leadership that is born out of vulnerability (Brown, 2018). Culture remains difficult to define, however, if culture can be conceived as the balance of visible and invisible rules that shape both our options

and choices, the PoP and OIP relies on a culture shift (Lumby, 2012; Hill & Curry-Stevens, 2017). In addressing anti-Black racism in schools, we must first acknowledge the need for this essential shift in culture. At the individual level, school leaders must first learn how to critically reflect on their own biases and perceptions and how this translates into their everyday practice. School leaders are responsible for leading educators in professional development, setting direction for school improvement and creating a safe and welcoming environment. Without the hard work at the individual level, the leadership in schools will not have the modeling staff need to buy in and believe in the change. It is not simply about managing schools but rather a call for courageous leadership to venture into new spaces of authentic collaboration between people from different contexts (Lopez, 2021).

Change 2: Willingness to Engage in Courageous Conversations

Research on diversity in teacher education has found that many teachers are concerned in engaging in anti-racist work because they do not have the confidence in their ability to work well with diverse students and families (Hollins & Torres-Guzman, 2005; Lopez, 2013). Racism in kindergarten to grade 12 schools is steeped in deficit thinking and colour-blindness that can undermine and mask the problem of racism itself (Lewis, 1992; Kohli et al., 2017). Students themselves have voiced the detrimental effects of systemic racism and differential treatment by teachers, administrators, and other students (Codjoe, 2001; James & Turner, 2017; Doharty 2019). The current gap at GDSB is not different with resistance originating from either a denial that there is a problem or fear of making a mistake in addressing anti-Black racism and the potential pushback and criticism that may be received.

Increased awareness of the issues and impact of anti-Black racism will reinforce the vision for change but also build the confidence of school leaders to facilitate the much-needed

conversations at the school level, and in turn begin to lead the learning for school-based staff and students. This stage will take some time as part of doing the work in equity is persevering through difficult conversations and continuing to advocate for change amidst colleagues, parents, and the community presenting challenges and obstacles. There is no overnight solution and this stage will require resilience and commitment on the part of the school leaders and everyone involved to focus on the overall vision and goals.

Change 3: An Intentional Anti-Black Racism Focus Embedded in Learning

School-level leaders require professional development and learning about anti-Black racism and its impact it on the outcomes for our Black student population. Ongoing opportunities for professional dialogue about the issues, along with strategies and solutions will help to promote critical self-reflection and hopefully engage individuals to take ownership for their own learning. Stage five of the XLR8 model speaks to empowering employees for broad-based action (Deszca et al., 2020; Kotter, 2012). Targeted capacity building that is founded on trust relationships and engaging in courageous conversations within a safe environment will allow for individual professional development and build the efficacy to lead the change through intentional actions.

Change 4: Culturally Responsive Leadership to Build Trust Relationships with Marginalized Community Members

Educators, researchers, parents, and communities in Ontario have identified concerns and challenges with the education of Black students for the past four decades (Dei, 2008). The impact on Black students from differential treatment (e.g., labeling, lower expectations, absence of teacher diversity, suspensions and expulsions) by race cannot be underestimated (Dei, 2008; Kaiser et al., 2016; James, 2019). Culturally responsive leadership will be pivotal in building

relationships with the Black parent/guardian community that are based on truth, transparency, accountability. Culturally responsive leaders must examine their beliefs and values, and how these are reflected in their practices (Lopez, 2016). Transforming a school and the education system with an anti-racist and anti-oppressive approach must prioritize and center the concept of community (Dei, 2008; Khalifa et al., 2016). Leaders must be ready to actively listen to the voices of Black students and their families, and be prepared to respond and take action to correct inequities and the discrimination faced by the Black community.

Authentic engagement of the Black community will depend on the school leaders' ability to engage in culturally appropriate ways (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2021). This means that time and energy must be invested into getting to know and understand each student and family, and bridge the gap that currently exists between the school, student, and home. The goal is to listen to the concerns being brought forward, believing that these experiences are happening, and taking steps to change these encounters towards a positive interaction and outcome. In building the capacity of school leaders to engage appropriately and openly with Black students and parents, they will need to be mentored and supported through the process. Lopez speaks about a collaborative mentorship approach that will promote reflection and changes in practice that are more responsive to the schooling needs of Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Lopez, 2013). GDSB must build the capacity of school leaders to earn the trust of both their staff so that they will engage in professional learning and dialogue, as well as the families so that they can demonstrate the commitment to the moral duties of education.

Working Towards Decolonization

School and district leaders must be willing to lead by example and challenge the system from the top. Without this type of modelling of courageous conversations and actions, school

leaders will not have the support needed to do this work. Disrupting the dominant discourse by validating and centering the counter-stories of Black students and their families will be critical in moving towards more culturally responsive and relevant practices at all levels (Amiot et al., 2020). Lopez asserts that reconceptualizing multicultural education as a decolonizing effort can only begin when those of us who live in the West, enter into these spaces with open minds and a willingness to disrupt North American hegemonic ways of knowing (Andreotti, 2021; Lopez, 2018). Decolonizing education involves critical perspectives and the action of challenging White supremacy and how colonialism manifest itself today within our education system (Lopez, 2018; Parekh et al., 2018).

District leaders are in positions where policies that govern what and how GDSB operates can be brought to the table with the critical lens that carefully examines long-standing practices for systemic barriers and discrimination that have not served Black and minoritized students well. As leaders guiding the district, the modelling of reflective practice, courageous conversations, and standing up for not just injustice but for what is not working for Black students and families. A key tenet of decolonizing theory is the conscious decision to continue to reflect on the effects of past colonialism and present neocolonialism (Lopez, 2018).

The call is for school and district leaders to deeply search within themselves to understand their positionality and influence in decolonizing education. The conversations that culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy calls for at the school level between educators, students, families, and school leadership must be modelled and bravely initiated at the most senior level in order to dismantle the systemic racism and discrimination that exists in our education system today.

Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

Building school leaders' capacity and self-efficacy in addressing anti-Black racism issues within classrooms and schools will involve solutions that must be centered on culturally relevant pedagogy though a lens of decolonization. Culturally relevant pedagogy originates from the need to reach and teach Black students in a different way, from an asset-oriented lens (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Culturally responsive leadership challenges dominant, euro-centric structures and systems that have pushed Black students, families and culture to the margins. As a starting point, the voices of Black students and families must be centered, heard, and acted upon as an expert advisor on what changes are needed. Actively engaging partners both within and outside of the organization will be important throughout and after the change implementation as all of these members will play a significant part in working towards successful innovation and change (Plank, 1988). Decolonization aligns with re-envisioning education as community and opening up the dialogue of schooling as a collective and shared responsibility (Aczel et al., 2017; Dei, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Building and creating a shared vision of GDSB's desired state will require the advocacy of leadership and change champions working in collaboration to create a culture that is open to bringing race and difference to the center of schooling (Dei, 2008; Khalifa et al., 2016).

The four potential solutions to the PoP outlined below are responsive the base line change readiness of GDSB while championing the moral imperative to create inclusive school spaces that is free from systemic barriers and discrimination.

Solution 1: Ensure an Anti-Racist Lens in Policy Development and Review

All publicly funded school boards in Ontario are governed by a board of trustees that are locally-elected representatives of the public advocating for education. School board trustees

have duties outlined under the Education Act, including the responsibility for policy direction (Education Act, RSO, 1990). Policies and procedures provide the operational framework for school leaders and staff in a broad range of areas pertinent to the overall day-to-day functioning of the school district and how services are delivered. These are developed based on current legislation, policy and program memorandums from the OME, and other local considerations that may be relevant. The board of trustees recruits and appoints the director of education, who carries out responsibilities for implementing the board's policies. The senior administration team, led by the Director of Education, are responsible for regular policy review that may require the creation of a new policy or rescinding of older policies.

Racism is a systemic process that operates at multiple levels of an organization, including the interpersonal, institutional, and structural domains (Hill & Curry-Stevens, 2017). Generally, policy reform is aimed at improving evaluation systems, engagement of multiple partners, and leaders themselves (EPNoSL, 2010). Change at the institutional level can begin in the governance domain where structures can be evaluated and potentially adapted to make space for greater inclusion and equity. Policies and procedures set the direction in a district and also speak to the values and mission that are central to its purpose. Well-written and articulated policies make it clear to all partners what they can expect from the school board. This is an important factor in determining and communicating executive support for change, and will contribute to the advancing a clear picture of the future desired state where systemic barriers are dismantled. Foundationally, for GDSB, policies and procedures set the standards of expectations in many ways for the service of education and how it is delivered to students and families. Policy and procedure written with a clear anti-racist lens will provide clearer direction and support for school leaders engaging in anti-discriminatory work and changing practices within their schools.

Ensuring an anti-racism lens in policy development and review is important in providing the internal structure and guidance that legitimizing and supports the work happening at the ground level. Using an anti-racist lens in policy review requires that race and difference are centered and consistently considered in policy direction by asking questions about the intended impact and potential inequitable outcomes, with an evolving equity lens (Dei, 2008; Hill & Curry-Stevens, 2017). Intentionally inviting and engaging partners in policy input will provide a broader perspective and voice in transforming governance in a more meaningful and impactful way. Policy changes to address systemic inequities will support other strategies being employed to dismantle discrimination and barriers.

One of the key resources required for this solution is time. Careful review of policies with an intentional anti-racist lens will need to start with a co-created framework that highlights key features and flags that may exist within current policies. This structure should help facilitate and engage senior leaders and partners in critical evaluation that involves deeper thought and reflection to consider individuals and groups who have been overlooked. These questions should point to equity gaps highlighting those who benefit compared to those who are marginalized, whose voice and perspective is raised compared to those that are silenced, as well as breaking down processes that uphold and perpetuate the status quo. This is a viable solution to be considered because it is an enhancement of an already existing process for policy creation and review but adds a layer of an anti-racist lens.

Solution 2: Leadership Capacity Building Grounded in a Comprehensive Equity Leadership Framework

Ontario uses the OLF as a practical guide for school and district leaders to engage in effective leadership practices through a collaborative approach and ongoing professional learning

(IEL, 2013). The OLF has undergone some evolution from its first introduction in 2006 to a revision based on further research in 2013 (IEL, 2013). In 2022, what is explicitly missing from this leadership roadmap is a clearly articulated equity lens that must be weaved throughout each pillar and touch all aspects of leadership in the education. With ensuring equity as a central goal of Ontario's publicly funded education system, including decolonized language and broadening perspectives and voice in decision making is critical component of creating spaces where every student can be successful within a culture of high expectations (OME, 2017). The development of a comprehensive Equity Leadership Framework will support the capacity building of leaders in the area of equity, providing a focus for professional development, dialogue and effective strategies to lead change in their schools.

This is a time of heightened expectations for organizations to address issues of racial disparities with more equitable systems and practices (Hill & Curry-Stevens, 2017; Turner, 2019). School leaders are responsible for engaging their school communities in working towards these school improvement and equity goals. In order to effectively do this, they must be anti-racist leaders who first need to be critical learners in understanding history and complicity (Dei, 2015). A comprehensive framework for equity leadership will embed an ethic of critique that school leaders must use to question and challenge educators and staff to think differently about the things that have not worked in education, and re-connect to the moral purpose of education (Ehrich et al., 2013).

Time devoted to building school leaders' capacity, both in terms of awareness and understanding of anti-Black racism issues within the context of education and society as a whole will build the overall level of competency for school leaders. Professional development aimed at increasing the level of knowledge of Ontario's history with anti-Black racism and the colonial

structures that maintain the current system of marginalization will inform the leadership strategies and approaches used in guiding school improvement efforts with a decolonized and anti-racist lens. Learning for school leaders' can be scaffolded through pre-existing structures for leadership development and mentorship, along with other professional development opportunities around critical reflection, understanding bias and how leadership practices are impacted. This is a critical solution that directly impacts the ability of school leaders' to lead with meaningful and deliberate actions for change, and model the change desired with confidence.

Solution 3: Intentional and Active Engagement of Partners in Courageous Conversations About Race

Intentional and active engagement of partners through courageous conversations about race is a solution to building school leaders' capacity and efficacy because it will essentially deepen the authentic, cultural knowledge amongst the partners themselves, including students, staff, and families. Working with a decolonized and anti-racist lens, the core work of equity must involve a broad range of partners within and across the organization, particularly those who have not historically had a voice. Culturally responsive pedagogy emphasizes how crucial it is to not only acknowledge the diverse and multiple social identities of students, but to spark teaching practices that engage educators in learning about their students' backgrounds, strengths, needs, and interests (OME, 2013).

Within professional development and dialogue, courageous conversations about race create necessary opportunities for self-reflection and deeper consideration of how school and district leaders can maintain and create barriers for Black students. Organizations are cooperative, social systems where individuals' emotional and social needs can have more

influence on their behaviour and performance than monetary incentives (Burnes, 2009). Greater understanding of inequities that exist and the how systemic discrimination operates is a cornerstone for effective change and belief in a shared vision of racial equity in schools. Focused on the resolution of social conflict for minority and disadvantaged groups, Lewin's approach to change hinged on individuals and groups learning about themselves (Burnes, 2009). In a time when school boards are compelled to examine personal bias and learning about critical reflection, Lewin's approach emphasizes this pre-requisite to changing behaviour by one's own volition (Burnes, 2009). This intrinsic motivation may be spurred by an awakening of sorts where individuals can begin to shift along the continuum of social justice identity development towards initiating actions for change (Bell & Griffin, 1997).

The premise of courageous conversations is based on Singleton's work that centers race in the discussion about addressing gaps between achievement white students and those of colour and Indigenous ancestry (Singleton, 2015). These conversations require educators, in particular, to let go of the idea that schooling is inherently non-racist, and shifts to opening up the possibility of listening to the stories of Black and racialized students that help teachers understand, examine, and fix the ways in which race impacts achievement (Singleton, 2015).

Solution 4: Regular Use and Monitoring of Race-Based Data in Relation to Goals, Priorities, and Performance Indicators to Support Student Equity, Well-Being, and Achievement

In June 2017, Ontario passed the Anti-Racism Act (ARA) which outlines a number of requirements to address systemic racism and the policy concerns regarding social, health and economic problems that disproportionately affect Indigenous, Black and racialized communities (ARA, 2017). Through this legislation, the government was required to create and maintain an

anti-racism strategy, and with consultation, establish an anti-racism impact assessment framework and standards for race-based data collection (ARA, 2017). The education sector must comply with demographic data collection requirements by July 1, 2023 (ARA, 2017). The legal requirement for school districts creates some urgency and external pressure to ensure compliance with this solution.

The intentional use of race-based data to inform goals and support evidence-based decision making in working towards eliminating systemic racism and promoting racial equity (Ontario, 2018). Having this type of local data will also help to build awareness about issues of racial inequity within the district and set clear targets and goals that can be measured. A range of evidence, including race-based will support monitoring and securing accountability for assessing an organization's practice and commitment to change initiatives in relation to equity, well-being and achievement for marginalized students and families. This solution requires time spent on determining what data will be used for monitoring, how it be communicated and shared in a way that is transparent with all partners.

Ideal Solution in Response to GDSB's Change Readiness

The changes required are complex and multi-layered, ranging from shifting culture, ongoing learning opportunities to changing mindsets and practice, and building authentic and trusting relationships with the Black community (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Lopez, 2021; Shah, n.d.). The change readiness of GDSB must be considered in the context of COVID-19 and the impact on mental health and rise in psychological distress and trauma (Cameron et al., 2021; Quinn et al., 2021). Colour-blind ideology and racism-neutral approaches (James & Turner, 2017; Kohli et al., 2017) combined with the mistrust and racial trauma endured by the Black community (Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Sanders, 2022) underlines the need for foundational

learning and relationships to prepare school leader to effectively address anti-Black racism in schools. The most appropriate solutions for GDSB are to collaboratively develop a comprehensive Equity Leadership Framework, while simultaneously engaging with partners in courageous conversations about race.

An equity leadership framework would clearly outline for school leaders what steps and visible actions are required from anti-racist leaders who will be champions for marginalized and under-served Black students. CRT provides a lens from which assess the gaps and barriers that exist for Black students and re-imagine a system where Black culture, perspective and lived experiences inform and guide the path forward toward a culturally relevant education system. GDSB school leaders will need to engage in ongoing critical self-reflection on where they are at along the continuum of social justice identity development. From there, they can locate the areas in which they need to grow and develop their own competencies. The learning they model and engage in can be done simultaneously as they lead their school staff in doing the same. Targets and goals can be set through existing frameworks such as the Annual Learning Plan for teachers and the Annual Growth Plan for principals and vice-principals, that would complement ongoing courageous conversations about race and equity that are central to meeting the needs of Black students.

Leadership Ethics, Equity, Social Justice, and Decolonization Challenges in Organizational Change

Educational leaders who care about equity and social justice are keenly aware of the growing urgency to overcome the persistent and pervasive inequities in education (Capper & Green, 2013). Critical perspectives on educational leadership demand that close attention to differences between privileged and marginalized students is required in school improvement

efforts (Burnes, 2009, Capper & Green, 2013, Khalifa, 2021). In developing strategies and actions to dismantle systemic barriers, the lens of anti-racism and decolonization helps inform and leverage meaningful actions to disrupt the status quo, while also presenting challenges and tensions in the current hierarchical and colonial education system.

Leadership Ethics

Ethical and socially-responsible leadership is needed more than ever before in response to growing public concerns about long-standing social inequities. Developing anti-racist leaders who are driven by the ethical responsibilities in creating socially just schools are foundational to successful change. Building the capacity and efficacy of GDSB's school-level leadership to address the violence associated with anti-Black racism is deeply connected to the four ethical standards of care, respect, trust and integrity (OCT, n.d.). Educators must uphold both the standards of practice and the ethical standards for the teaching profession (OCT, 2016). These ethical standards explicitly address the ethical responsibilities and commitments that guide both individual and collective action (OCT, 2021). The development of an Equity Leadership Framework will support school leaders in developing personal and professional learning goals that will translate into authentic and intentional actions that impact the experiences, opportunities, and outcomes for Black students. One of the challenges in dealing with anti-Black racism is in recognizing and accepting how this operates within the daily operations of school life. The resistance can come in the form of defensiveness, white fragility, along with shame and fear that results in silence and inaction. Leaders who are champions of racial equity will need to be resilient in moving forward with learning opportunities, ongoing modeling of courageous conversations, and the continued efforts to center the voices and experiences of Black students and families.

In response to today's political climate and the global demand for social justice, school leaders can no longer be complicit and also consider multiple forms of accountability, particularly those concerned with issues of ethics (Burnes, 2009; Ehrich et al., 2013; Meehan 2009). The ethical standard of care demands that Ontario educators attend to the well-being and learning of students that is dependent upon compassion, empathy, insights and positive influence of educators in the classroom (OCT, n.d.). For Black students in particular, educators must be knowledgeable about what anti-Black racism is, how it operates in silent ways within education, and the impact it has on Black students' mental health, well-being, and achievement (Kohli et al., 2017; School Mental Health Ontario, 2021; OCT, 2021). In order to understand the lived experiences of Black students and their families, school leaders must be committed to engage in critical reflection and interrogation of their pedagogy and practice, while centering Black voices and perspectives.

The ethical standard of respect centers on trust and fair-mindedness (OCT). These values should be displayed in the professional practice of educators through the modelling of respect for individual students and the fullness of who they are including various spiritual and cultural values. Respect for diversity can be demonstrated is through the use of culturally responsive pedagogy. Being culturally responsive goes beyond typical understandings of ethnicity, race, etc., and simply recognizing the diversity that exists. The institutional dimension refers to leadership of schools and the essential need for critical examination of marginalizing structures and practices (OME, 2013; Khalifa, 2021). Leading with culturally relevant pedagogy is particularly important for Black students whose access to education has historically and continues to be marked by exclusion and ongoing struggles (Codjoe, 2001; Henry, 2019; Johnson, 2013). As a result, the ethical standards of trust and integrity are critical in the

professional relationships amongst students, colleagues, and families (OCT). The lack of trust in the school system from Black students and their families presents a huge challenge that must be addressed head on. Building trust will be dependent upon the Black community seeing the action and change within classrooms and schools (Dei, 2008; Lopez, 2013).

To dismantle anti-Black racism, ethical leaders must intentionally model critical self-reflection of bias, and also actively engage in learning about systemic racism and barriers (Ryan, 2005). Distributive leadership also has an ethical orientation and aligns with culturally responsive leadership in that both see power as most effective when in the hands of a collective or group of people working together (Khalifa, 2021; Ryan, 2005). A strong commitment to values and long-term outcomes is the foundation of culturally responsive and distributive leadership, which essentially honours the moral imperatives that surround our work in education.

Equity and Social Justice in Education

Leadership that fights for social justice in education requires a firm commitment to culturally relevant pedagogies (Chunoo et al., 2019). The concept of culture and shifting culturally norms is also critically important in its relationship to social justice, and the ability to shift individuals and groups towards equity goals (Lumby, 2012). The ethical standard of trust is present within culturally responsive leadership and is required to open up challenging dialogue and build bridges to engage historically marginalized and under-served groups in our system (Lopez, 2020). Through observation and dialogue, the shift in culture will hopefully be evident through a greater sense of openness and willingness to initiate and actively engage in these courageous conversations about race (Singleton, 2015).

Decades of research recounts the negative experiences of Black students and families, involving experiences of negative stereotyping and attitudes from students and teachers (Neal-

Jackson, 2018; Quinn & Stewart, 2019), daily microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007), harsh exclusionary punishments and involvement with law enforcement (Caton, 2012; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011). In Ontario, more recent reports confirm stories of negligence and disregard resulting in the continued alienation and problematic schooling for Black students (James, 2019; Parekh et al., 2018). Links have been made between the racism experienced to a health and safety epidemic for Black students who have alienated and disengaged from learning and school environments (James, 2019; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011). Knowing this, we are morally obligated to do everything in our power to ensure that Black students are given equitable opportunities to be successful and feel happy at school.

The issues, including the lack of appropriate resources and materials, adverse treatment by teachers and peers, and the unwillingness to address racism, contribute to the alienation and exclusion of Black students in schools (James, 2019; Sanders, 2022). These concerns present both a moral and ethical dilemma for school leaders who must uphold the ethical standards of the teacher profession and demonstrate that measures of accountability are being taken to uphold public trust. The recent professional advisory on anti-Black racism clearly highlights the significance of the ethical standards and obligation on the part of educators to pay special attention to their bias and how this may impact the way these ethical standards are applied to students who identify as Black (OCT, 2021). This would be equally important for leaders within the system to make an intentional commitment to critically reflect on their own bias and the impact it has on their leadership approach, pedagogy and practice.

The ethical responsibility of leaders is to meet the education needs and interests of Black students and parents, and create safe spaces where racism and discrimination is not tolerated. Further, our schools need to be centered on the experience, knowledge, and aspirations of our

students within culturally responsive learning spaces (Lewis, 1992; Dei, 2003). Addressing these inequities will support GDSB's overall work in improving student well-being and achievement. Leaders must focus on changing school culture that is often complacent, in order to support social justice because the reinforcement of the status quo, power, and advantage over others (Lumby, 2012). GDSB will use courageous learning conversations about race, racism, and discrimination as a key strategy to initiate and sustain lasting change. Continuous confrontation, through courageous conversations, is risky and challenging, but the result is ultimately transformative (Houchens & Keedy, 2009).

Decolonization Challenges in Organizational Change

Decolonization is a process that everyone must own and calls on educators and leaders to rethink what we know and believe about the education system and how it works (Lopez, 2018). Addressing systemic inequities requires the deconstruction of internalized racially biased myths that create barriers to achievement and are deeply harmful to student well-being (Amiot et al., 2020). The frustration within the Black community around what they interpret as discursive manipulations by the school is a point for critical reflection (Dei, 2008). One of the greatest challenges in decolonization and accountability for marginalization is engaging in the unlearning that must first occur in order to open our minds to the creation of a new space, rather than an adapted one (Dei, 2003; Lopez, 2018)

In building school leaders' capacity and self-efficacy in addressing anti-Black racism in schools, the unlearning involved in working toward decolonization will play a central role. In the early stages of planning and building a shared vision, the challenges will be in engaging school leaders in uncomfortable and unfamiliar anti-racist conversations that will push their thinking. The purpose and reason for change must be communicated clearly and with urgency given the

ethical implications of addressing anti-Black racism in education. Particularly when it comes to racial issues and inequities, there will need to be substantial commitment made in communicating the urgency for change and the desired impact. Internal and external responses and emotions will need to be carefully considered and addressed in order to plan successfully for the culture shift that will be needed (Deszca et al., 2020).

Leadership for Equity and Social Justice

Culturally responsive leaders improve the well-being and educational achievement of students through actions including critical self-reflection, community advocacy and engagement (Khalifa, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Shah, n.d.). The ethical commitments of all those working in education, including myself, must be grounded in serving marginalized students. In addition to confronting anti-Black Racism, this action will benefit all students and the whole community. School leaders have a tremendous influence on the school environment as sites of colonial oppression (Lopez 2021), and culturally responsive school leadership provides the necessary framework that is needed to meet the ethical obligations of the teaching profession (Khalifa et al., 2016; Shah, n.d.). In implementing meaningful change initiatives to better the educational opportunities and outcomes for Black students, the ethical responsibilities are mirrored in the behaviours that frame culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). School leaders must rise to the occasion and use their agency and power to engage in ongoing courageous conversations about race to better understand and advocate for positive change that will welcome Black students into educational spaces of belonging, emotional safety, and engaging, relevant learning.

Educators and school leaders have a responsibility to enhance and develop their own critical self-awareness, values and dispositions as it relates to serving students of colour (Kalifa

et al., 2016). This is critical if educators and school leaders are to move towards confronting oppression and standing behind beliefs and ethics that value race and culture. School leaders must also provide supportive and reliable mentorship to their staff in order to build capacity, confidence and longevity in persevering through the complex journey towards decolonization (Lopez, 2013; Shah, n.d.). Culturally responsive pedagogy will not come easily and without deep reflection on personal bias, pedagogy and an examination of ethical values for teaching. Lopez describes effective mentoring as a relationship build around trust, sensitivity, understanding, and hope. These are the values that must underpin how we serve our most vulnerable students. School leaders have an ethical responsibility to improve and align their leadership practices to transform educational systems that are truly responsive to the diverse identities and needs of the Black community (Shah, n.d.).

Aligning with the values of care and respect, an anti-racist and anti-oppressive approach to school leadership must center the community, counter-narratives, and elevate marginalized voices that have not been heard (Dei, 2008). Within an ethically-based approach, the key to resolving social conflict is to facilitate learning that allows individuals to reconstruct their perceptions about the world around them (Burnes, 2009). Closely tied to ethical responsibilities, deconstruction must be accompanied by a commitment to unlearn, a willingness to be vulnerable and interrogate one's practice, and the courage to engage in the work itself. There is a deep relationship between culture and social justice that further emphasizes the need for leaders to engage deeply with culture (Lumby, 2012).

Within the change implementation plan, continuous feedback and monitoring will support mobilization of strategies for change. Through professional development opportunities grounded in courageous conversations, the development of school leaders' social justice identity

development will lay the foundation for continued learning and engagement with culturally responsive pedagogy. Ongoing support for school leaders as they build their own efficacy in equity leadership will be critical in making the necessary cultural shifts to provide safe, engaging and meaningful environment for Black students.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

The PoP of building school leaders' capacity and efficacy to address anti-Black racism in schools has been framed using a hybrid of Lopez's NOFS, Kotter's XLR8, and Deming's PDSA models to prioritize partnership, authentic collaboration, and a critical reflection throughout the change process. These priorities will continue to be highlighted in the change implementation plan that outlines how the change plan will be brought to life within GDSB, through a culturally responsive approach that centers the voice of community, particularly those of marginalized and under-served students and families.

Change Implementation Plan

The solution that best matches the organizational readiness of GDSB is a combination of two of the proposed solutions to building school leadership capacity and efficacy in addressing issues of anti-Black racism: 1) to collaboratively develop an Equity Leadership Framework coupled with; and 2) intentional and active engagement of partners in courageous conversations about race. Traditional leadership approaches that are primarily rooted in dominant discourses and histories of colonization do not capture the skills needed to lead in a way that is responsive to students and their diverse needs (Shah, n.d.). The hybrid leadership approach (i.e., social justice, culturally responsive, and distributive leadership) will highlight voices from the margins and center change efforts on the conditions that perpetuate systemic barriers for individuals and groups, rather than taking a deficit approach to "fixing" the students and families. Decolonization calls for school leaders to draw from their agency to unlearn, learn, relearn and reframe their understanding of racism and discrimination, approaches to teaching and learning, and long-held practices that continue to marginalize the Black student body (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Shah, n.d.). Grounded in decolonizing work and practice, educational leaders must

think beyond the current structure of the education system (Wallace, 2020) and look to alternative leadership frameworks, ways of knowing, and wisdom that challenge the status quo, (Shah, n.d.). In the context of anti-Black racism, change is critical to correct past failures and accomplish learning and improvement (Lewis, 2019). Without dismantling some of our existing structures, frameworks and approaches to serving the Black community, marginalization and discrimination will continue to be perpetuated within an institution that has significant power and deeply ingrained history and normalized racism (Khalifa, et al., 2016; Shah, n.d). The hybrid leadership approach underlines the importance of counternarratives, and brings these perspectives to the forefront of dismantling anti-Black racism, and calls educators and leaders, who impact the daily lives of Black students, to challenge the status quo from the inside and engage differently with the community. Engaging differently starts with listening and believing their stories of racism and discrimination, that directly oppose colour-blind approaches and acknowledges the interest convergence that create significant obstacles to change.

Authentic and meaningful professional development of school leaders, supported through a comprehensive Equity Leadership Framework, will set the foundation for building the capacity to address anti-Black racism issues within classrooms and schools. With support and mentoring, individual school leaders must contemplate their values and moral purpose as educators of increasingly diverse students and families, and the multicultural global society. The permanence of racism and understanding of whiteness in education, deeply informs the learning strategy that must include critical self-reflection and constant interrogation of personal and professional practices in order to ignite and mobilize lasting changes that will live beyond this time in history where there is a spotlight on the inequities and increased social unrest (Khalifa et al., 2016). The continuous change necessary to see a more socially justice education system demands that

changes move beyond token and performative actions to embedding change within every day practices that directly impact Black students (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021).

This work would not be possible without the continuous engagement of all partners in courageous conversations about race as a strategy for change (Singleton, 2014). Having these conversations are fundamental in naming anti-Black racism and anti-Blackness in the education system. Those within the education system must embrace a culturally responsive approach that will center the voices and lived experiences of Black students and families, if they are to truly recognize and acknowledge the negative impacts the current status quo has on Black student well-being and success. The Equity Leadership Framework will identify actions that are required at both the individual and collective level that intertwine in relationship with each other to mobilize change at different levels (Lopez & Jean-Marie). Anti-racist leaders are then capable and competent in their abilities to lead their school communities to engage in continued conversations that will fuel the work towards a newly imagined education system.

The development of an Equity Leadership Framework is discussed around the four stages of the NOFS model with references to the specific detailed steps outlined in XLR8. Throughout the plan, successful implementation will rest on the strength and reliability of a clear communications strategy that includes formal and informal elements throughout. The implementation plan specifies the intentional actions to support equity leadership development and change, with clear details about who will be doing the work and how progress will be tracked and measured to ensure a successful change initiative (Deszca et al., 2020; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). With a combination of best practices that align with social justice, culturally responsive, and distributive leadership approaches, school leaders will be guided in a reflective process and given opportunities for input and feedback throughout the change process. A hybrid

of Kotter's XLR8 and Lopez's NOFS is used to outline the implementation plan for developing an Equity Leadership Framework, while at the same time supporting school leaders in addressing anti-Black racism every day. Although the implementation plan may appear in a linear order, the ongoing, multi-faceted nature of the conversations and communication across various partner groups should be seen as continuous opportunities to engage in critical dialogue in order to understand, listen, and respond in meaningful ways that honour a culturally relevant and community-based approach.

Stage 1: Naming Anti-Black Racism

Representation and partner engagement will be a priority in creating a broad-based guiding coalition to lead implementation and monitor progress. Authentic engagement with educational partners on relevant issues, educational debates and policy development will promote and center advocacy for vulnerable groups, bring forward a range of perspectives, and ultimately increase the value of strategies and actions through shared decision-making (Dudar et al., 2017). Distributive leadership will foster a greater sense of purpose and ownership that results when individuals and groups are given a place at the decision-making table will be a powerful motivator for collaboration and collectively working towards deeper change. Technical and time management elements such as meeting dates, locations, protocols and norms will need to be established early on to provide direction and delegate responsibilities to move the vision forward in a planned but efficient way. Building in accountability for action from the outset will demonstrate commitment to an anti-racist agenda versus performative allyship (Lopez, 2020).

The establishment of a diverse and inclusive guiding coalition that intentionally seeks out marginalized voices and varied perspectives is the first foundational step in pursing authentic anti-racist goals for change. As a supervisory officer responsible for equity and inclusive

education, I have direct agency and influence over the composition and functioning of the guiding coalition. As the lead facilitator, using a culturally responsive approach, bringing together internal and external partners who represent diversity in identities, roles and perspectives, the development of key goals derived from authentic conversations that center the lived experiences of the Black community is critical to dismantling barriers. A meaningful change vision and strategy must be co-created with all partners and informed by evidence and data. Engaging partners, including students, parents, guardians, staff and community members is necessary to ensure that the insights and perspectives of the whole community are honoured and included. Partner engagement will ensure fairness and representative data (Dudar et al., 2017) and lays the foundation for smoother implementation by lowering resistance and anxiety related to change, while increasing the satisfaction of partners and feelings of control (Lewis, 2019). One of the unique challenges is that many different partner groups have an interest in education, and as a result of having gone through some type of education system themselves, all feel qualified to hold an opinion about teaching, learning, and school operations (Dudar et al., 2017). This is also an opportunity for authentic engagement and dialogue from a place of comfort and safety with the overall goal of analyzing what works and doesn't work based on evidence. These human experiences and perspectives are a necessary lens to understand evidence-based realities of the classroom and current research (Dudar et al., 2017). There is great potential for broadening the base of champions and change agents that will work together to impact pedagogy and approaches both in the classroom and school that directly result in better outcomes for Black students.

During this first stage of planning for change, it is imperative to name and acknowledge anti-Black racism in education (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Using the continuum of social

justice identity development from Chapter 2, school leaders will engage in self-reflection to determine where they would place themselves based on their current level of understanding, awareness and actions related to their equity work. Understanding where school leaders are along this continuum will inform this planning stage. The degree and complexity of interdependence between and amongst the various partners in education must be intentionally considered and factored into the engagement process for developing a clear vision and strategy that will support where school leaders are currently at (Lewis, 2019). Most importantly, clear messaging of the starting point of the conversation and the challenging and emotional work ahead is critical. School leaders must know from the outset that systemic racism and discrimination are inherently embedded within educational institutions and structures, and it is the ethical responsibility of all those in education to work to dismantle barriers at the individual, interpersonal, and systemic levels.

In establishing a sense of urgency, all partners need to be aware of and understand the ethical and collective responsibility to create an equitable educational system where Black students can thrive and reach their fullest potential. Reflecting on the equity work as a journey, the early stage of Naming will take some time as the awareness and understanding of the core issues needs time and careful planning. Appendix D outlines suggested timelines but depending on the response and feedback of partners, these timelines may need to be stretched. School leaders must evaluate their own beliefs, biases, and practices while leading their staff to do the same, which is a very challenging task. The shared vision for change must embrace collective efforts and endeavour to tap into the social consciousness of people where action is inspired and witnessed through rising up in protest against systemic injustice like and anti-Black racism and other forms of oppression (Lopez, 2020). Further, Lopez emphasizes the need to specify how

anti-blackness and anti-Black racism are manifested in every day schooling (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Without this understanding, the need for change will not be valued or understood, and meaningful and impactful changes cannot reach the students' and make their experiences and outcomes more positive. Deficit thinking often hides student and teacher abilities, and is especially powerful and damaging because they are unspoken (Weiner, 2006). Through a lens of decolonization, educators and leaders must critically evaluate ideas and practices that have long been overlooked and taken-for-granted ideas. As the most recognizable leadership position in the school, principals must be continually engaged in learning and supported to challenge the implicit assumptions that can work to undermine cultural responsiveness (Khalifa et al., 2016; Weiner, 2006; Shah, n.d.). The current political landscape and pressure for organizations to enact change and show greater accountability for racial equity certainly contributes to the momentum for immediate changes that will hopefully push individuals, groups, and organizations to make a deeper commitment to take part on the journey towards racial equity in education.

Stage 2: Owning Anti-Black Racism

After a guiding coalition has been established and the engagement process has started, a communication strategy must be developed in alignment with the goals and strategic actions. In collaboration with the guiding coalition, an expert or member of the district's communications department would ideally be leading in this area. Communications priorities at this initial stage would be to establish clear and precise key messages that are broad enough to carry through the change implementation process. Transparent and open sharing of the goals, actions and accountability measures should also be planned through the use of a variety of communication devices and tools including flowcharts and visuals. Ongoing engagement opportunities should be

planned through public meetings, email submissions, open forums, and other opportunities for both formal and informal input and feedback.

Owning the issue means claiming responsibility for our own power and agency, with deep contemplation of how educators and leaders, as individuals are complicit, and the actions necessary to demonstrate accountability (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). On top of a diversity gap in GDSB, research shows that many white people are not comfortable with conversations about race (Jean-Marie & Mansfield, 2013; Singleton, 2014, 2018). Given these two factors, it is a social justice imperative to build up school leaders' capacity and efficacy in initiating and engaging in courageous conversations about race as a strategy for change (DiAngelo, 2018; Singleton, 2014, 2018). It is clear that changes made through word of mouth demonstrate the powerful influence of peer relationships (Lewis, 2019). Time spent in supporting school leaders to own the issue of anti-Black racism will translate to their school community and hopefully engage others to do the same (Wallace, 2020). Individual reflection on how issues of anti-Black racism impact them both personally and professionally will enhance effective organization and connection to the goals of racial equity in schools.

The pre-work in co-developing the vision and strategy with partners will provide the necessary foundation for strategic communication as the change vision is shared with the district. Culturally responsive and distributive leadership aligns with the collective social and ethical responsibility to provide an equitable learning space for Black students. This work will involve significant time invested in schools to explore data-informed questions related to which students experience positive vs negative outcomes, how groups of students relate to each other, and how systems and beliefs supporting disparate outcomes (Wallace, 2020). At the individual level,

owning shared responsibility for dismantling anti-Black racism requires constant critical reflection and reframing deficit thinking (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Shah, n.d.).

Throughout this stage, continued strong and clear messaging in relation to the goals, strategies, impact, and accountability are crucial. Drawing upon the larger goal of dismantling systemic barriers, Lopez calls for collaborative approaches to resistance that draw upon the lessons of the past and contemplates what resistance can and should look like in different contexts and spaces (Lopez, 2017). Overtime and with purposeful reflection, anti-racist educators need to understand why systems that counter the problematic and biased status quo matters to them and how they can change practices within their own sphere of influence. (Wallace, 2020). For school leaders, this means that they are not alone and through the continued courageous conversations, they will find other champions and advocates willing to engage in the difficult work of examining both individual practices and systemic structures that perpetuate anti-Black racism. Educational partners at all levels can feel strangely empowered by the bonds formed across the district grounded in common values and ethics. The phase of owning anti-Black racism may be the most challenging step as many school leaders may perceive the school system as legitimate and fair, and deeply value their role in maintaining order and instruction. School leaders will need to be supported through collaboration and mentorship to develop their racial equity lens that is critical for the success of undervalued students within the current education system (Wallace, 2020). Teams of school leaders and teachers working together in a peer coaching and mentorship model of learning has a powerful influence on changing teacher behaviours that positively impact student outcomes (Dudar et al., 2017; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Grounded in the development of the Equity Leadership Framework, district leaders will need to

build in mentorship and coaching to support school leaders in both their learning and direct actions for change.

The foundation built upon collaboration, shared responsibility in decision-making, and authentic opportunities for engagement within inclusive spaces, will support honest assessment of successes, challenges and next steps. Although the assessment is discussed here in this section, it is a reflective process that should be happening throughout the implementation process in order to challenge our thinking and complicity with the system. School leaders should be encouraged and supported through evaluating their local circumstances to identify early gains. Identified actions should be monitor actions through multiple continuous feedback loops that will be responsive to the partners and community. This continuous cycle will help to empower partners to continue to engage and challenge the inequities they encounter in every day school life.

Stage 3: Framing Anti-Black Racism

This phase of implementation is about using the pre-work and foundation over the previous two phases to focus in on the intentional and purposeful actions that will support school leaders in leading the charge to dismantle anti-Black racism. Repeated key messaged and celebrating short-term gains of school leaders such as creating spaces for courageous conversations, hearing more student perspectives that may not have been considered, and regularly engaging in self-reflective practice. These gains should be communicated through ongoing updates that further secure accountability for change implementation. School leaders must be intentional about finding spaces in their work (e.g., discipline approach in dealing with Black students) where they can commit to purposeful actions, in collaboration with partners, that address anti-Black racism (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Although challenging, only through

meaningful collaboration and ongoing reflection can successful change occur within the school (Wallace, 2020).

School leaders will need the full support the community to develop and lead human-centered approaches with an anti-racist lens, that stem from the ethical belief that individuals and their experiences matter over other mandates (Wallace, 2020). This will be challenging as the education is set up in ways that it is not always responsive to the people, students and staff within it (Wallace, 2020). The intentional actions of school leaders must disrupt deficit paradigms where educators may become discouraged when they come face-to-face with unquestioned practices and conditions because they know that they cannot eliminate these on their own (Weiner, 2006). Distributive leadership approaches allow the whole community to engage with change, and harnessing the different voices and perspectives will illuminate new new possibilities that have eluded us in the past (Weiner, 2006).

Developing anti-racist leaders is an evolving process where not only the work itself, but the individual who must engage in ongoing reflection. Seeking regular feedback on racial and economic ecology of schools from education partners will help identify personal blind spots (Fergus, 2019). Every person has a blind spot and every system has a process gap which can be incredibly difficult to identify with the naked eye (Wallace, 2020). Courageous conversations must continue here to deepen critical understanding of anti-Black racism. These conversations will lead to practical outcomes such as sharing resources, building their own inventory of resources, and promote ongoing reflection, consideration of their own agency, while engaging with tensions involved with critical education practice (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). The co-created equity leadership framework will provide explicit processes for leaders and staff to

examine their personal, professional and organizational beliefs about race (Singleton, 2018) as a very necessary foundation for this work.

Stage 4: Sustaining the Work

Dismantling anti-Black racism in schools by creating new and equitable spaces for Black students and their families requires whole system change at the individual, classroom and district level (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). School leaders can own this work by setting clear learning goals for themselves that encompass aspects of critical reflection, learning and researching on their own about the history of anti-Black racism in Canada and specifically how it has manifested within Ontario schools, and then commit to actions that have been co-created with their school communities. This is not enough. Collective and ongoing efforts are crucial to persevere on this equity journey. As school leaders develop their competency and move along the Continuum of Social Justice Identity Development, and develop their knowledge and skills outlined within the Equity Leadership Framework, they will be better positioned to respond to their unique school communities and develop more responsive school improvement plans to address anti-Black racism in the spaces where they have the most influence. Accountability measures needed to ensure that actions are not random acts, ensure sustainability, and focused actions that are more intentional and thoughtful (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). All principals and vice-principals are required to complete an annual growth plan that is used to guide learning opportunities each year, that must now also include a focus on leadership competencies and practices that will support the promotion of school cultures that uphold principles of equity and human rights (Education Act, 1990). District leadership should further engage in learning conversations and provide encouragement and support in order to build in evaluation and accountability into practice (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Senior leadership as a whole, will also

require intentional training on anti-Black racism and commitment to leading and supporting this change.

Along this journey, school leaders will require critical friends inside and outside of the education system (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). The continuous feedback loop involves self-reflecting individual racial consciousness, identifying where their staff is individually along the social justice identity development continuum which will allow school leaders to inoculate their community from various harms (Wallace, 2020). In particular, the community as a whole will need ongoing support and network for collaboration that will address any feelings of isolation while working towards anchoring new approaches into the culture of the school (Rosario, 2014). The ultimate goal is to create lasting and sustainable change in all aspects of society including education (Lopez, 2020). Efforts have made some change they have not gone far enough in naming white supremacy and settler colonialism that operates in education and society to keep the status quo in place (Lopez, 2020). School leaders must harness the energy of the current movement and promote continued reflection and learning that results in new, unimagined spaces in education. Greater collaboration between academics, practitioners, activists, community members, school leaders, parent groups and others working towards greater equity in education is needed more than ever in these challenging times (Lopez, 2017).

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

The hybrid model that blends Kotter's XLR8 and Lopez's NOFS is complemented by the PDSA model that is familiar to GDSB. With partner engagement being central to the implementation plan, there is a natural cycle of feedback that is informing the next small strategic move in making change within the schools. The plan, do, study, act cycle should be taking place at the end of each stage of NOFS, providing opportunity for continuous dialogue

about what is working and what the challenges are. What is different is that partner voice must be central to the analysis and decision-making around next steps, and there are smaller cycles that are happening throughout the change process at various levels. An integrative process for monitoring and evaluation starts with a common set of framing evaluation questions that speak to what the intended change or desired vision is. In other words, what is the purpose or change goal? Given that educators working in Kindergarten to Grade 12 spaces have an opportunity to correct practices—and beyond (Munroe, 2021), the OIP is dedicated to building the capacity of school leaders to create equitable spaces for Black students. Appropriate monitoring cannot happen in isolation of community voice and direct engagement with Black students who ultimately validate the impact of interventions. The desired vision can be guided through the following two results-based evaluation questions:

1. How are school leaders and supervisory officers developing an equity lens to reflect on and change practices that positively impact outcomes for Black students?
2. How effective are learning development tools and activities in building leadership capacity to address anti-Black racism in schools?

The tools and methods used will include both quantitative and qualitative measures that will engage the voices of all partners. Culturally responsive leaders must work directly with the individuals and groups who should be benefiting from any proposed changes.

With greater demands for accountability of organizations to demonstrate actions to eliminate inequities and systemic barriers, monitoring and evaluation is critical to ensuring transparency in communicating change efforts and results. Monitoring provides information about the progress in change implementation, whereas evaluation can highlight the successes and challenges that inform improvements and adaptations needed for successful implementation

(Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The OIP is grounded in a decolonized framework where partners are collaborating and listening to different perspectives in building the supports and capacity for school leaders to address anti-Black racism in schools. Partner engagement and critical reflection is a foundation to the change strategy. Culturally responsive leadership calls for a shift from school-centric approaches to ones that are in the best interest of the communities being served (Dei, 2007; Khalifa, 2021). In facilitating change, school leaders are learning and collaborating with their communities. It is of utmost importance that racial trauma be acknowledged and steps to increase the protective factors for Black students who are responding to the psychological and emotional distress of negative interactions in schools (Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Munroe, 2021). The integrative model for monitoring and evaluation fits in nicely and would also be expected by all partners. There is a complementary role of monitoring and evaluation, and an integrated approach provides a unitary focus and a space for accountability and learning to co-exist (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

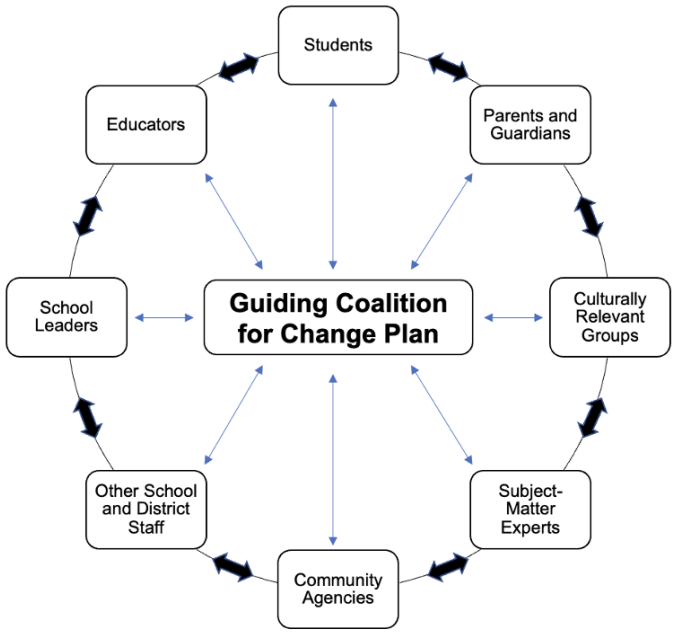
Similar to the planning and doing stages where partners were engaged in naming and owning anti-Black racism in their classrooms and schools, this broad-based intentional inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives are critical for success. Addressing anti-Black racism in schools is a community project that must challenge the current status quo of even how change is handled in a top-down, hierarchical manner in many cases. Providing voice and empowerment by utilizing diverse partners as key resources in the change vision and implementation will positively impact the manner, rate and overall success of change implementation (Lewis, 2019). The communication flow between and within partners is varied and intricate. Fostering and engaging in authentic opportunities for partner voices to be heard will require dedicated time, but

these efforts will continuously pay off in creating systems of lasting change and ongoing work that is motivated horizontally across the district.

Organizational learning denotes a change in overall knowledge and the work behind this change is at the individual, group, and senior levels (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015). Figure 2 illustrates the multiple pathways of open communication flow that values diverse perspectives and allows for authentic voices to influence and impact decision-making throughout the change planning and implementation process.

Figure 1

Partner Voice and Communication Flow



The guiding coalition will act as a moderator to incorporate the various perspectives and insights into the monitoring and evaluation processes that will further inform the change plan. This networked, horizontal model can enhance knowledge mobilization efforts as partners are included from the outset and make learning and change sourced, validated, shared, and employed in more efficient and meaningful ways (MacGregor & Phipps, 2020). Organizational learning is strongly associated with factors such as supportive leaders, respectful staff interactions,

consistent goals and vision, and positive changes in feeling of safety to participate and engage in decision-making (Austin & Harkins, 2008; Lopez 2013). Building relationships and knowing different partners, their perspectives and experiences in education, will ultimately serve to move forward with the whole community centered.

Monitoring the Change Process

Success of change implementation is enhanced when people understand what it entails, why it is being undertaken, what the consequences of success and failure are, and why their help is needed and valued (Deszca et al., 2020). Partnership, especially with those who have been marginalized, is essential in correcting and resetting an oppressive system. Building the change vision for racial equity with a guiding coalition, that represents a broad range of perspectives and voice, supports immediate and long-term actions and provides a layer of built-in accountability. In the "doing" stage, continuing the change vision along with regular updates on progress will support partners in owning the work and their responsibility for agency and change (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Partner voices and perspectives continue to be integral to how progress is measured.

Monitoring the development of individuals' equity lens and reflective practices is extremely challenging. In owning the work of eliminating anti-Black racism, school leaders must personally reflect and understand the change needed and claim ownership for (Lopez & Jean-Marie). In this regard, the varying voices and perspectives of different partners will provide deeper insights and inform true progress. Evaluation will be an important information source to gain insights from the partners who are most impacted by the changes being sought. Participation and engagement in developing and using the Equity Leadership Framework, courageous conversations, and the effectiveness of learning opportunities are key areas to be assessed.

Quantitative data will include the number of participants who engage in the co-creation of the Equity Leadership Framework and attendance at training sessions. The co-creation of the Equity Leadership Framework involves two components or levels. The first level includes all partners to add voice and perspective to the key attributes and actions that are desirable and required for equity leadership. The second level is an invitation to school leaders for further dialogue and reflection to deepen their learning. The collaboration involved in co-creating the Equity Leadership Framework is also an opportunity for learning and setting the foundation for using the framework more independently in the future. Documentation of meetings, who was in attendance, agenda items and action plans, and follow up will be important as part of the reflection process and accountability to partners that work is being done.

Qualitative data will be collected through conversations, observations, and feedback surveys to gage how school leaders are managing and collaborating with their community in change implementation. These measures are perhaps less tangible but equally if not more important in keeping reaching the change goals. Courageous conversations about race help to build the level of racial consciousness and becomes a meaningful vehicle for hearing and responding with cultural relevancy (Singleton, 2015). Observations, including feelings of comfort and "reading the room" can be extremely powerful in assessing change impact and movement towards greater comfort and willingness to engage in dialogue about race equity and education.

The strategy for change incorporates learning in context (Fullan, 2006) that aligns with the need for on-the-job mentorship and guidance for equity learning (Lopez, 2013). Monitoring the effectiveness of learning opportunities will need to include partner voice and perspective to know if there is a difference being made for Black students. The goal of any learning opportunity

in education should ultimately be to positively impact the student experience at the granular level of teaching and learning. Surveys that will assess the relevance and usefulness of learning opportunities must explore questions that are specifically aimed at understanding what school leaders learned and how this learning will change their practice in proactively addressing anti-Black racism and responding to issues and concerns about racial equity. Table 4 provides an overview of the quantitative and qualitative data that will be collected to monitor key areas of the change implementation plan.

Table 4

Monitoring to inform results-based questions

Results-Based Question	Monitoring
How are school leaders and supervisory officers developing an equity lens to reflect on and change practices that positively impact outcomes for Black students?	Key areas assessed: Equity Leadership Framework | Courageous Conversations • Number of participants and level of engagement in co-creating equity leadership framework • Frequency of equity leadership issues on district meeting agendas • Opportunities to engage in courageous conversations about race and other equity issues
How effective are professional development tools and activities in building leadership capacity to address anti-Black racism in schools?	• Attendance at professional learning opportunities – layered with observation and conversation • Level of participant satisfaction with professional development tools and activities – post-training survey • Equity goals outlined within school leaders' annual growth plans

The communication strategy during the change implementation process will regularly inform partners about progress, as well as obtain and listen to feedback on attitudes and issues, (Deszca et al., 2020). The conversations both with the guiding coalition and on the ground courageous conversations with and between students, parents/guardians, staff, and other partners will help to identify misconceptions, clarify new organizational roles, structures, systems, continue to nurture enthusiasm and support along the journey (Deszca et al., 2020; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Sharing successes and celebrating short-term wins motivates ongoing action, and informs planning through further investigation of what is working. The communication will

occur in formal ways at set points though the implementation but is also occurring hopefully on a daily basis by using courageous conversations as a strategy for change itself (Singleton, 2015). The value of face-to-face approaches to communication should not be overlooked (Deszca et al., 2020). Discussing the change experience and engaging in a critical reflective process will continue to be driving force that enables partners to authentically be included as the district works to create inclusive spaces.

Evaluating the Change Process

Evaluation will inform the ongoing strategic actions needed to reach implementation goals by helping to identify the approaches that have been working and examine the factors that contributing to success. The quantitative and qualitative data gathered in the monitoring process will help to inform evaluation of the implementation plan at planned intervals and in response to the participants and partners. Surveys will be issued at least once in each year of implementation and depending on the feedback and input from various partners, may be used at different junctures to support the learning cycle. The evaluation will identify the approaches that did and did not work and examine the reasons for success or failure, and learn from both to inform the next steps needed (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). In many ways, this is occurring informally though ongoing reflection and conversation with and between partners on a regular and frequent basis. The nature of the PoP and structures within the OIP demand for ongoing dialogue that will inform and push the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle within an iterative and back and forth model as opposed to a simply linear format.

Evaluation looks at the achievement of objectives that include the use of resources and outcomes and impacts related to partner needs, engagement and reactions (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The key resources needed for the OIP are human resources and time, and the

quality and effectiveness of the time spent in learning will factor in significantly in determining success or failure of the implementation plan. Quantitative data will include the number of formal and informal learning opportunities provided and the number of participants in attendance. School leaders' annual growth plans and performance appraisals that must include an equity focus will provide useful information about the level and range of changes that may be happening in schools. Disaggregated data by race integrated with well-being and student achievement indicators will provide a clearer picture as to whether or not the changes being implemented are positively impacting the educational outcomes of Black students. Qualitative data collected from the monitoring process will also inform the evaluation and the success in developing school leaders' racial equity lens and the effectiveness of learning opportunities. Table 6, provides an overview of the quantitative and qualitative data that will be collected to evaluate key areas of the change implementation plan.

The measurement and control systems in place clarify the expected outcomes and enhance accountability (Deszca et al., 2020). Formal communication at set points of evaluation enhance momentum by transparently sharing successes and updates about change implementation (Deszca et al., 2020). The opportunities provided to hear directly from those in authority, ask them questions about the change and its impact tend to increase positive reactions and decrease negative ones (Deszca et al., 2020). Informal communication that is happening far more frequently can play an even larger role in successful change as partners are included and know that they are valued and critically important for success.

Table 5

Evaluation to inform results-based questions

Results-Based Question	Evaluation
How are school leaders and supervisory officers developing an equity lens to reflect on and change practices that positively impact outcomes for Black students?	Key areas assessed: Equity Leadership Framework | Courageous Conversations • Equity goals outlined within school leaders' annual growth plans • Principal/Vice-Principal Performance Appraisals conducted on a 5-year cycle with supervisory officer
How effective are professional development tools and activities in building leadership capacity to address anti-Black racism in schools?	Quantitative data disaggregated by race, including: • % of students who accessed mental health services • % of students who received targeted early reading and math supports • Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) provincial assessments • % of students enrolled in university, college and workplace bound courses in grade 11 and 12 • % of students participating in job skills programs (e.g., co-op, Specialist High Skills Majors, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), Dual Credits) • % of suspensions and expulsions Qualitative data, including: • Partner feedback/input survey – administered at the end of each school year • School Climate Survey – administered every two years

An Integrative Approach for Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation both contribute to informing the change strategy and implementation plan in an integrative approach that focuses on the results and goals of the OIP. The courageous conversations, reflections and learning opportunities are all vehicles for organizational learning that can potentially build trust, understanding and empathy between partners that lead to desired changes at the individual and group level. Monitoring this data helps to inform the evaluation of school leaders' development of an equity lens and the effectiveness of educator practices that can be ascertained through qualitative surveys. The more concrete

quantitative data on student outcomes can be compared to the feedback of school leaders, and considered together to determine strategic changes and adaptations that are needed at set evaluation points. With encouragement, support and mentoring, the PDSA learning cycle can potentially be happening at multiple micro-levels of the individual and the school, while concurrently being modeled at the district level. The ongoing conversation about the need for change and interventions being applied are to be used as intentional opportunities to hear feedback and input from Black students and the community at regular intervals, with the goal of making adaptations along the way as needed.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

Change is often necessary to correct past failures, accomplish learning and improve the organizational efficiency in meeting operational goals that align with an organization's mission and vision. (Lewis, 2019). This parallels an experiential approach to civic learning where partners can be engaged in a cycle of learning, action, and reflection about relevant problems that they care about (Kirshner et al., 2021; Sanborn et al., 2021). GDSB is working towards the integration of culturally responsive pedagogy to address the inequities within the education system and its impact on an increasingly diverse student population. The insights and experiences of Black students and families should root and continuously inform the change process cycle (Cohen et al., 2018; Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Kirshner et al., 2021). It is critical for district and school leaders to recognize the considerable administrative privilege they wield (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Khalifa, 2021). This is an extremely challenging tasks for school leaders who view themselves as neutral and need further critical self-reflection, with ongoing learning about systemic barriers and discrimination. If district and school leaders are not mindful and critically self-reflective, they will be unresponsive, or worse, perpetuate racial

trauma, and be oppressive towards community perspectives and needs (Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Khalifa, 2021; Sanborn et al., 2021). Ultimately, community voice is critical in the foundation for lasting change (Lewis, 2019) in working towards creating and maintaining truly inclusive spaces, that will contribute significantly as a protective factor for student engagement, agency, and belonging (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Kirshner et al., 2021).

Clear and transparent communication throughout the entire organization before, during, and after the change process will enhance the success and longevity of change implementation to better the school district. Communication plays a broad and impactful role in significantly advancing the overall understanding of strategic change by providing ongoing opportunities for partners to meaningfully engage with organizational and environmental issues (Ocasio et al., 2017). A comprehensive and detailed communication plan will focus organizational attention to influence the ways in which strategic issues, initiatives, and action are prioritized and handled (Ocasio et al., 2017). For GDSB school leaders, clear messaging about the issues of anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination, along with intentional actions for change will support their work in leading anti-racist practices in their schools. Further, from a decolonized lens, the success of the change implementation must be measured by a variety of perspectives (Lewis, 2019) held by our partners in education, but most importantly by Black students and their families. For GDSB, a robust communication and monitoring plan will center the voices of Black students and their families in developing the implementation plan putting ideas into practice, and assessing outcomes.

Building a Shared Vision Through Strategic Communication

From its inception, the change implementation plan must involve frequent and clear two-way communication with partners to authentically engage multiple voices, while centering the

voices of those who have been historically under-served and marginalized (Sanborn et al., 2021). Throughout this stage, school leaders must push back against the comfort in hiding behind the narrative of neutrality of rules and systems that continues to perpetuate current inequities (Khalifa, 2021). Before school leaders can move ahead in addressing anti-Black racism in schools, they must first understand and believe that racialized community members have neither been recognized nor engaged in our current realities (Khalifa, 2021; Sanborn et al., 2021).

The guiding coalition, discussed in Chapter 2 will help to examine the nature and characteristics of the most efficient and effective communication channels to be employed (Ocasio et al., 2017). Strategic change communication must consider the how the individual assessment of the actual size and scope of change impacts the change process (Lewis, 2019). These considerations include how individuals perceive the change impact on themselves, their own lives may be, what is valued within the organization, history with change, and most profoundly, the interactions with others (Lewis, 2019). Further, negotiations will be needed in politically sensitive change to come to an agreement of the goals, the change implementation plan, and the roles of various partners in the change process. Given the high degree of interdependence amongst the partner groups, careful consideration must be given to the structures that will allow for authentic conversations about the change needed and how to best move forward as an organization. Just giving partners a seat at the table is not enough – the ongoing opportunities for genuine decisional input must be valued, honoured, and prioritized throughout the entire process (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Kuhn & Deetz, 2008; Sanborn et al., 2021).

Communication Plan for GDSB

In the development of a strategic change vision and plan to develop school capacity and self-efficacy in addressing anti-Black racism, GDSB will provide engagement opportunities through formal and informal communication with all partner groups. Formal communication will include official announcements and updates, declarations and policy set by organizational leaders, co-created details about rate and timing of change, invitations for feedback/input, etc. (Lewis, 2019). Informal communication that includes spontaneous interactions with partners may play an even larger role in determining outcomes (Lewis, 2019; Sanborn et al., 2021). This type of spontaneous communication includes asking for and providing information and interpretations about what the change will mean for various individuals and groups, relaying opinions, views, concerns about change, expressing hopes, values, wishes, and providing positive or critical feedback (Lewis, 2019; Sanborn et al., 2021).

Partners will interact with implementers, leaders, decision-makers and with one another on a daily basis about the substance of change, the process of change and the implications and reasons for change (Lewis, 2019). As a culturally responsive leader, it will be important to be acutely aware of the status quo and how dominant discourses are centered and upheld. In facilitating engagement, a clear conversation protocol must be in place and monitored at every session to support meaningful and progressive dialogue that adds to laying the foundation for intentional actions that promote change. These communications have the potential to shape attitudes, willing participation and ultimately, the outcomes of strategic change initiatives (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Lewis, 2019). Clear and transparent feedback will help to build trust with the community and various partner groups, which in turn will support successful implementation and more authentic feedback to inform next steps and changes needed along the

way. Table 6 outlines the various formal and informal communication tools and the benefits of its use during the entirety of the change process.

Table 6

Formal and Informal Communication Tools and Benefits

Communication Tools (Lewis, 2019)	Benefits
Formal Communication Tools	
Official announcements and updates	• Signals level of importance through key messaging
Policies and protocols with respect to change	• Provides official guidance and helps ensure consistency with messaging and implementation
Invitations for feedback	• Ensures that partners are given opportunities for authentic voice throughout the implementation process
Formal responses to partners regarding challenges, questions, and concerns	• Reciprocal communication to continue engagement where partners can see that their opinions and input shape the decisions being made
Informal Communication Tools	
Asking and providing information and interpretation of what the change will mean for particular partner groups	• Demonstrates interest and authenticity in the inclusion of varying perspectives and interests, particularly from marginalized voices
Relaying opinions, views, and concerns about the change	• Supports the authentic development of shared goals and provides information to inform the monitoring process (e.g., adjustments and supports needed to address concerns)
Confirming, contradicting, and speculating about the formal communication	• Gives valuable information on how formal communication is being received and understood, and informs potential revisions and adaptations, as well as next steps to support successful change implementation
Expressing hopes, values, wishes relevant to change	• Centers the voices of the community and ensures that the goals and change implementation is responsive to the Black community and their expressed needs
Sharing stories about how change has impacted them and their work	
Providing positive or critical feedback to peers about their participation	• Supports ongoing courageous conversations about racial equity in schools, and stimulates critical reflection and informal measures of accountability

Communication Pre-Implementation – Developing a Vision and Strategy

Early communication in order to gather initial thoughts, feelings and perspectives of various educational partners will be an important step to understand the current level of awareness and acceptance of the existence of anti-Black racism within the education system. Given the propensity and power of deficit ideologies, and beliefs that North America is a

meritocracy, knowledge of these social forces is not widely held (Griffiths, 2013; Kirshner et al., 2021). School leadership is often characterized by the imperative to maintain order and control in schools, which in turn supports and secures the status quo (Griffiths, 2013). Before school leaders can expect educators to be advocates of inclusion and social justice, educators must grasp and understand how societal forces construct the world so as to limit and constraint certain individuals and groups (Griffiths, 2013; Sanford et al., 2021). Similarly, school leaders must focus on the *why* of education and dialogue about who is not benefiting from the current system —inclusion demands the role and purpose of school leaders be re-conceptualized (Griffiths, 2013; Sanford et al., 2021). Building a common understanding of anti-Black racism and how it operates within the system will require ongoing attention and work as individuals engage along the continuum of their own learning and positionality within the work towards racial equity.

In the early planning stage, establishing a sense of urgency for change will involve intentional opportunities for conversation and engagement of partners to discuss the inequities within the system, particularly for Black students. CRT provides a clear lens from which to view systemic inequities and critically evaluate how and why the current system fails Black students. The shared understanding and urgency in addressing anti-Black racism in education is dependent on public intellectuals, such as school leaders, who are brave enough to critique an education system that focuses on efficiencies and quantitative data rather than on serving students in a holistic way that will result in increased access, representation, meaningful participation, and positive outcomes for all students (Griffiths, 2013; Sanford et al., 2021). As a system leader with responsibility for the learning and oversight of school leaders, bringing forth a CRT lens will support the examination of professional practices and school operations. Forcing change without partner input often leads to negative consequences for change outcomes and overall success

(Lewis, 2019). Understanding that commitments to equity that challenge the status quo and entrenched power will face additional barriers to implementation will be an important consideration in both the strategy itself, timing, and communication plan (Kirshner et al., 2021).

At the pre-implementation stage, there will be more formal and direct dimensions of input used including the creation of a guiding coalition that will include all partner voices at the table, surveys, and scheduled meetings to keep communication open and consistent. Giving authentic voice, where partners are provided with meaningful opportunities to engage in discussion about a range of issues related to the change initiative, ultimately means that implementers and decision-makers fully utilize input in further decisions (Lewis, 2019; Sanford et al., 2021). Culturally responsive pedagogy demands that school leaders and all educators listen to the students and families with an open-mind to truly hear and understand their perspectives, experiences, and concerns. Formal invitations and responses to community voices will be essentially in creating culturally responsive change goals that directly come from Black students and their families (Kirshner et al., 2021). Courageous conversations at the school level using a variety of informal communication tools will be invaluable to developing a shared vision and strategy that partners can truly own and support. Through distributive leadership, individuals and groups are empowered to lead in their own spheres of influences and where they have agency to make intentional changes to meet local needs (EPNoSL, 2010).

Communication During Implementation - Community Voice and Empowerment

While change agents involved in macro change management functions play leadership roles, micro-change agents are managers for detailed change associate with intervention implementation and adoption of an intervention (Kang, 2015). Through a community-based approach and the goal of disrupting inequities, it is essential that the voices of those who have

been under-served and marginalized are continually centered in the conversation and monitoring for change (Kirshner et al., 2021; Sanborn et al., 2021). Partner engagement, such as asking for opinions, feedback, and reactions is encouraged by experts so that implementers can actively engage and empower partners, and successfully manage feelings and concerns about change (Lewis, 2019; Sanborn et al., 2021). Intentional opportunities for community involvement has multiple benefits for the change implementation process, including lowering resistance, increasing satisfaction, increasing feelings of control, reducing uncertainty about change (Lewis, 2019). The communication plan should honour diverse partners as a resource by asking them for initial guidance in developing goals and incorporate their perspectives and input on both what and how to change (Lewis, 2019; Kirshner et al., 2021).

Although formal communication will continue throughout the change implementation, informal and indirect communication channels will also play an important strategic role in being responsive to the community. Direct input from Black students and families must form the basis of what needs to change in school leadership to guide the necessary changes that will positively impact the Black student experience (Sanborn et al., 2021). The ongoing informal communication that happens at the school level will build the cultural awareness of school leaders about their students and families, that ultimately lays the foundation for greater understanding of the experiences of Black students and the urgent need for change. Ongoing communication is connected to building relationships and developing people within the OLF. Throughout the change implementation process, educational staff must question why students and parents often have completely different interpretations of behaviours and school incidents than teachers and administrators (Khalifa, 2021; Sanborn et al., 2021). This difference is even more stark when it comes to Black, Brown, and poor students (Khalifa, 2021). School leaders

will need to intentionally reflect on the Equity Leadership Framework and carefully consider how they approach and they use informal communication.

The partner approach to normative strategic management considers the moral and ethical obligations of managers to various partners that exemplifies corporate social responsibility (Lewis, 2019). Community-based epistemologies and perceptions have often been historically different from (and marginalized) school-based epistemologies and interpretations that have been normalized in schools (Khalifa, 2021; Sanborn et al., 2021). Schools and educators have had the exclusive power to define how students and families are characterized and treated in schools and continue to be disconnected to the communities they claim to serve (Khalifa, 2021). By providing a variety of structures and models for authentic input, change facilitators can evaluate the change incorporating diverse perspectives that may have been absent in the past (Kirshner et al., 2021; Lewis, 2019; Sanborn et al., 2021). Knowing this, system and school leaders must use both formal and informal communication processes to get to the heart of what needs to change.

Communication Post-Implementation

At the end of the change implementation, assessment must continue to center on authentic partner voice in determining the extent to which change goals have been met. Impressions, opinions, and feedback can be gathered through a formal assessment survey and by taking stock of informal observations and conversations. Communication post-implementation will involve formal report backs on the overall successes and challenges of the overall change strategy relevant to all partner groups. Given the continuous nature of the change being implemented and the understanding that racial equity will take years of unlearning, learning and change, post-communication is essential to laying the foundation for next steps. Continued

transparency and engagement of partner groups will signal GDSB's commitment to creating inclusive spaces where all students are inspired and successful.

The OIP outlines one hybrid solution and small step towards racial equity in GDSB schools. Focusing on intentional learning about anti-Black racism, bias, discrimination, etc., along with mentoring and resource supports for school leaders is just the beginning. Ongoing communication post-implementation is critical in keeping the work of equity and social justice at the forefront. Communication post-implementation should continue to highlight the successes and work happening across the district. More importantly, the post-communication blends into the pre-communication of the next steps along the equity journey that has been started.

Next Steps and Future Considerations of the Organizational Improvement Plan

CRT begins with the notion that racism is intricately sewn into the fabric of society and that it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture (Ladson-Billings, 2020; Theoharis, 2019), and essential to the work towards racial equity is the acknowledgement that White is a race and whiteness is a lived experience (Singleton, 2014). It is a moral imperative that all educators engage in the learning necessary to understand and challenge structural inequalities (Downey & Burkholder, 2018). School leaders, who attribute their position and power solely to meritocracy, need to keep learning about their own position, race, history of racism, and experiences of people of colour (Theoharis, 2019). Further, school leaders must commit to the personal work it takes to confront white racial privilege, ongoing critical reflection, interrogation of their own ideas, words, actions and how they communicate competence/incompetence (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Theoharis, 2019). Growing up in a settler society, the vast majority of people have been effectively colonized, and the path towards reconciliation involves learning about historical truth and the willingness to correct the mistakes

of the past through rigorous self-examination of practices to see the ways in which settler colonialism continues to be internalized (Downey & Burkholder, 2018). The OIP sets the foundation for school leaders to build on their learning journey towards race equity, where there is a constant cycle of reflection and action. School leaders must be knowledgeable in three key areas of student learning, cultural proficiency and critical consciousness in order to practice and engage with culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2020)

Commitment to Building Cultural Competency

The future of inclusion is anchored in our understanding of the world and involves learning how societal forces construct the world so as to limit and constrain certain individuals and groups (Griffiths, 2013; Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021). The denial of race and difference only serves to justify the status quo and its inherent systemic bias and disadvantage to non-dominant groups (Dei, 1999). Repudiation of race and the denial of difference only serve to reinforce the mistrust that many racially minoritized youth have of dominant institutions like schools (Dei, 1999). It is imperative for school leaders to personally commit to developing their cultural competency and recognize the centrality of race and difference in relation to the inequities within the education system. District and school leaders need to work from the alternative position that it is relevant and useful to hear oppositional voices and critical language as part of the necessary process of dealing with equity, justice and social change (Dei, 1999; Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Kirshner et al., 2021). In order to engage meaningfully and constructively with alternative perspectives, school leaders must think critically, grapple with multiple perspectives that challenge their own biases, build stamina for engaging with new and challenging ideas, engage in self-directed learning, and raise critical questions (Sanborn et al., 2021; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). This shift will be easier for some but will be challenge for all. School leaders will need

continued support and mentoring that pushes them to reconsider the education system and their roles as they have always known them.

Embracing the Change Journey – Continued Individual and Organizational Growth

Ongoing courageous conversations will be essential to engaging with partners in new inclusive spaces, where diverse voices are centered (Sanborn et al., 2021). There is a risk inherently involved as the development and pursuit of a critical and oppositional discourse to challenge power and dominance, opens oneself to assault, misinterpretations, abuse and denial (Dei, 1999; Sanborn et al., 2021). Key action in leading others in their own learning about race and white privilege is the development of a comfort level and language to talk about whiteness, race and racial oppression (Singleton, 2018; Theoharis, 2019). Leaders will not be able to support their schools and district in confronting racial privilege and oppression without developing their own foundation and comfort with language in discussing race (Singleton, 2018; Theoharis, 2019). The long-term goal is to build the capacity of racially-conscious leaders to confront privilege at the interpersonal level through courageous conversations that center on the ethical duty to care for all students (Liu, 2017; Theoharis, 2019). In order to make a positive and impactful difference for Black students, school leaders must call out racism, lead others in emotional and intellectual learning about race, and build supportive networks (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Theoharis, 2019). The ongoing courageous conversations will depend on the interpersonal courage of school leaders to see bias in their colleagues and educators' actions or words, and boldly confront it. Part of this work is in practising and developing the right language and touch in order for the recipient to hear it, and make the necessary changes (Theoharis, 2019). The necessary changes move beyond a handful of exceptional classes to becoming integrated and sustained part of K-12 systems (Krishner et al., 2021).

At the institutional level, official support for leaders and educators of colour must continue to support continued courageous conversations about race, inequities, and the change that is needed to right past wrongs. The use of data to find and root out disparate racial patterns, and expanding access and opportunities will provide the evidence to inform future goals and monitor change implementation (Theoharis, 2019). Investigating this data and leveraging outside reports must drive the high priority agenda to dismantle White privilege and forcefully challenge institutional practices and norms (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Theoharis, 2019). The Equity Leadership Framework developed should serve as a guide for school leaders who concerned with a shared vision, an imagined future state of education that ultimately requires initiative and responsibility irrespective of institutional hierarchy (Lawton & Paez, 2020). Moving towards an ongoing, successful strategy for educational change will be accountable to and empowering for specific groups whose knowledge, experiences, histories have been marginalised in educational systems in the Euro-American context (Dei, 1999). Working to dismantle anti-Black racism and educational barriers is a journey and all partners must all be prepared to engage in critical reflection. It is a moral imperative and the ethical responsibility of school leaders to create inclusive learning spaces that are reflective and responsive to the unique needs of Black students and their families, and uphold their right to a high standard of education.

Narrative Epilogue

It is still hard to believe that three years have gone by so quickly and that this incredible experience is coming to an end. As I reflect on my doctoral journey, it is without question, that I have grown both professionally and personally in ways that I did not imagine when I initially submitted my statement of intent and the equity research I hoped to pursue. It has been a roller coaster of emotions and insights that have ranged from inadequacy and frustration to excitement and inspiration. I have to admit, that there were many times throughout the program, especially in the first couple of years, where I questioned whether I could engage effectively at this academic level. I am most appreciative of the deep, challenging and provoking dialogue that has occurred, centered on decolonization and unlearning that has opened up a new world of possibilities for a truly transformed education system. Perhaps one of the deepest insights I am walking away with is the humbling realization of how much I do not know. The unlearning and learning ahead of me is wide and deep. More importantly, my commitment and resiliency to continue on this journey of "unleading" and influencing change through authentic partnership is stronger than ever.

As I write the final words on a three-year consolidation of my research, reflection, and learning, I am so grateful for the process more so than the final product. Being an educator has always been a vocation for me, and as educators, we are in positions like no other to powerfully change and impact the lives of those most vulnerable in our communities—this is our moral purpose and ethical responsibility. I see this as the beginning of a new chapter, rather than the end, and move forward with a thankful heart for the change I have realized in myself.

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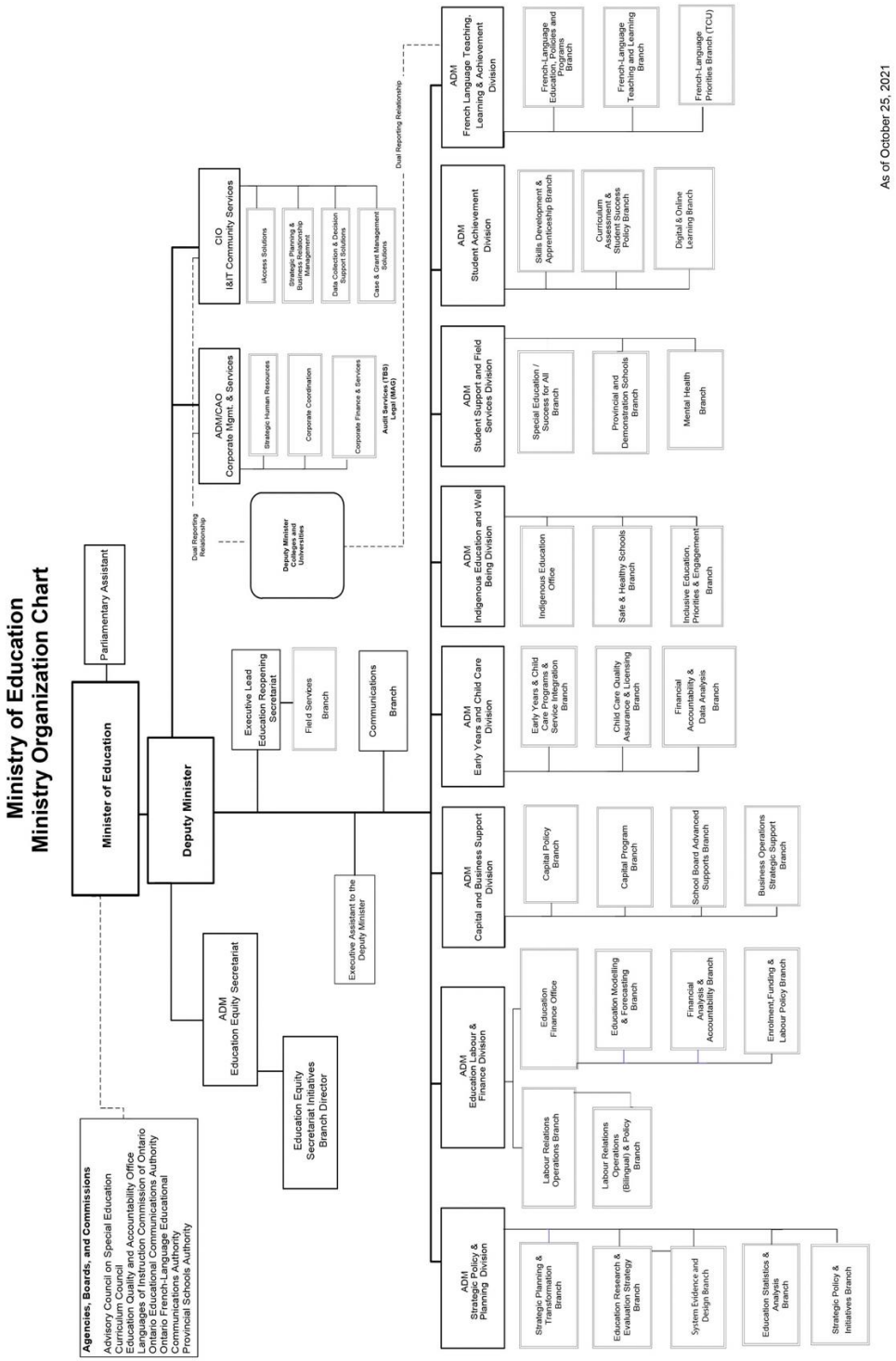
Appendix A

Ministry of Education Organization Chart



Note: From http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/edu_chart.html

Appendix B

Equity Leadership Competencies and Considerations for the Ontario Leadership Framework

Pillar/Areas of OLF	Equity Competencies and Considerations
Setting Directions	▪ Views system and provincial direction with a critical equity lens and regularly engages in shared thinking (e.g., engages families as partners) that utilizes culture as an asset and incorporates broad partner voices in decision-making ▪ Deeply reflects on and critically analyzes equity considerations necessary to support culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy within school improvement planning ▪ Intentionally addresses power and privilege, inequities, biases and systemic barriers through courageous conversations that promote awareness, understanding, and targeted actions
Building Relationships and Developing People	▪ Considers and utilizes non-traditional methods to engage students, parents/guardians and families to incorporate their identities and voices within all aspects of school life ▪ Engages in intentional actions to build better relationships with marginalized and under-served/under-represented students, staff and families within an open and invitational school culture ▪ Collaboratively arrives at solutions that are context specific, reflecting the individual needs of students and their social identities
Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices	▪ Regularly engages in courageous conversations as opportunities to model leadership that demonstrates vulnerability and accountability ▪ Develops and communicates equity-related school goals with all partners, and transparently shares successes and next steps ▪ Engages in and facilitates professional development opportunities to learn about issues of power and privilege, biases, discrimination, and barriers to students' sense of belonging, well-being, and success
Improving the Instructional Program	▪ Demonstrates a deep understanding of difference and its complexities through appropriate responses that take into account social identities, individual needs and circumstances ▪ Understands Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy in the context of curriculum, instructional approaches and strategies, through an asset-oriented view of diverse students

	▪ Builds staff capacity to create authentic and meaningful learning opportunities for students through inquiry that is reflective of students' identities
Securing Accountability	▪ Ensures school improvement planning and learning is focused on marginalized and underserved students ▪ Closely monitors implementation (e.g., selected strategies and actions) of school improvement planning to ensure that the needs of underserved students are met ▪ Takes ownership for successes and failures, measures results and shares learning which informs next steps to move closer towards equity goals

Note. Adapted from TDSB Equity Leadership Competencies, 2019.

Appendix C

Readiness for Change Questionnaire for GDSB – Initial Baseline

Readiness Dimensions		**Readiness Score**	
Previous Change Experiences		***Score***	***Range***
1	Has the organization had generally positive experiences with change?	1	0 to +2
2	Has the organization had recent failure experiences with change?	1	0 to -2
3	What is the mood of the organization: upbeat and positive?	1	0 to +2
4	What is the mood of the organization: negative and cynical?	-1	0 to -3
5	Does the organization appear to be resting on its laurels?	-1	0 to -3
Executive Support			
6	Are senior managers directly involved in sponsoring the change?	0	0 to +2
7	Is there a clear picture of the future?	0	0 to +3
8	Is executive success dependent on the change occurring?	0	0 to +2
9	Are some senior managers likely to demonstrate lack of support?	0	0 to -3
Credible Leadership and Change Champions			
10	Are senior leaders in the organization trusted?	1	0 to +3
11	Are senior leaders able to credibly show others how to achieve their collective goals?	0.5	0 to +1
12	Is the organization able to attract and retain capable and respected change champions?	1	0 to +2
13	Are middle managers able to effectively link senior managers with the rest of the organization?	0.5	0 to +1
14	Are senior leaders likely to view the proposed change as generally appropriate for the organization?	1	0 to +2
15	Will the proposed change be viewed as needed by the senior leaders?	1	0 to +2
Openness to Change			
16	Does the organization have scanning mechanisms to monitor the internal and external environment?	0.5	0 to +2
17	Is there a culture of scanning and paying attention to those scans?	0.5	0 to +2
18	Does the organization have the ability to focus on root causes and recognize interdependencies both inside and outside the organization's boundaries?	0.5	0 to +2
19	Does "turf" protection exist in the organization that could affect the change?	-1	0 to -3
20	Are middle and/or senior managers hidebound or locked into the use of past strategies, approaches, and solutions?	-2	0 to -4
21	Are employees able to constructively voice their concerns or support?	0.5	0 to +2
22	Is conflict dealt with openly, with a focus on resolution?	0.5	0 to +2
23	Is conflict suppressed and smoothed over?	0	0 to +2

24	Does the organization have a culture that is innovative and encourages innovative activities?	0.5	0 to +2
25	Does the organization have communications channels that work effectively in all directions?	0	0 to +2
26	Will the proposed change be viewed generally appropriate for the organization by those not in senior leadership roles?	1	0 to +2
27	Will the proposed change be viewed as needed by those not in senior leadership roles?	1	0 to +2
28	Do those who will be affected believe that they have the energy needed to undertake the change?	1	0 to +2
29	Do those who will be affected believe there will be access to sufficient resources to support the change?	0.5	0 to +2
Rewards for Change			
30	Does the reward system value innovation and change?	1	0 to +2
31	Does the reward system focus exclusively on short-term results?	0	0 to -2
32	Are people censured for attempting change and failing?	-1	0 to -3
Measures for Change and Accountability			
33	Are there good measures available for assessing the need for change and tracking progress?	0	0 to +1
34	Does the organization attend to the data that it collects?	0	0 to +1
35	Does the organization measure and evaluate customer satisfaction?	0	0 to +1
36	Is the organization able to carefully steward resources and successfully meet predetermined deadlines?	0.5	0 to +1
The scores can range from -25 to +50		10	-25 to +50
If the organization scores below 10, it is likely not ready for change and change will be very difficult.			
• The higher the score, the more ready the organization is for change. • If the score is below 10, the organization is not likely ready for change at the present. • To increase readiness, change agents can use the responses to the questions to help them identify areas that need strengthening and then undertake actions to strengthen the readiness for change.			
Change is never "simple," but when organizational factors supportive of change are in place, the task of the change agent is manageable. **The purpose of this tool is to raise awareness concerning readiness for change. Change agents can modify it to better reflect the realities of their organization and industry.**			

Note: Taken from Desza et al., 2020

Appendix D

GDSB's Organizational Change Readiness Summary

Carefully assessing change readiness	GDSB Details and Information	Next Steps Required
Why change? ▪ Perspectives of internal and external partners ▪ Examine motives and interests of partners	▪ Internal and external partners have been engaged in the initial conversations about how to move forward in addressing anti-Black racism and discrimination ▪ Over the past year, GDSB has communicated to internal and external partners about the need for change ▪ One of the priorities has been to build awareness and understanding of the rationale behind the change needed to better support Black students ▪ Transparent communication has been consistently provided to internal and external partners regarding steps being taken in support of a comprehensive equity strategy	▪ Develop clear key messages regarding the priority of equity in education that incorporates the voices of partners ▪ Continue to invite input and feedback to address concerns/obstacles as they may arise ▪ Transparently share ongoing work and initiatives to support shared goals and vision to address system inequities
Data sources ▪ Make sense of internal and external data ▪ Share knowledge and information broadly with partners	▪ Workforce Census was completed 5 years ago ▪ Student census data needs to be collected by 2023 based on Anti-Racism Act, 2018 ▪ Reports shared publicly ▪ Opportunities for consultation and input have been made available and summary reports shared with partners	▪ Continue to implement and monitor recommendations made through the Workforce Census to increase diversity in the GDSB workforce ▪ Develop plan for student census with broad partner consultation
Leadership concerns and perspectives ▪ Engage in individual and collective reflection ▪ Have courageous conversations to	▪ Professional development and capacity building sessions have focused on intentional reflection on bias and assumptions being made in decision-making ▪ Courageous conversations about race have been encouraged and modelled by senior leadership,	▪ Continue professional development of staff at all levels regarding anti-Black racism and anti-discrimination ▪ Using courageous conversations as a strategy for change,

solidify a shared vision	and there has been a shift in the comfort and willingness to engage in conversations about race	continue to engage in conversations about race with
Individual and collective efficacy ▪ Listen to concerns and address obstacles head on to support and overcome problems as they arise	▪ Through consultations with various partners, GDSB has heard about the concerns and issues facing racialized students and families ▪ Students and staff have given their perspectives, input and feedback on the required next steps and solutions to address inequities for Black students	▪ Continue to engage partners throughout the development and implementation of equity strategic actions through a continuous feedback loop ▪ Continue building individual and collective efficacy of school leaders through modelling and targeted professional development opportunities

Appendix E

Change Implementation Plan – 2 Year Cycle

Year 1				
	XLR8 (Kotter, 2012)	**Time Frame**	**Strategic and Ethical Considerations**	**Implementation and Communication Strategy**
PDSA Model – ongoing community feedback and critical reflection	**NOFS – Naming Anti-Black Racism** (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)			
	1. Establish a sense of urgency	August to October	Build shared understanding and raise the consciousness of leaders to issues of racial equity (Richmon, & Allison, 2003) Evidence is needed to help partners see the need for change (Odiaga et al., 2021) Culturally responsive leaders must examine their beliefs and values and how these are reflected in their practices (Lopez, 2016; Lumby, 2012)	Early pre-change communication to all partners – invitation to engage in the development of goals and the decision-making process (Dudar et al., 2017; Lewis, 2019) Invite participation through surveys, open forums, meetings with target groups/communities Clearly name anti-Black racism in the system and the work that is coming to dismantle it (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)
	2. Create a guiding coalition	November to December		Create a broad-based, diverse team to guide change implementation process through a collaborative approach – high degree of interdependence and complexity amongst partners (Lopez, 2013; Lewis, 2019) Provide structure by determining meeting norms, and protocols, roles, meeting schedules to structure shared decision-making (Dudar et al., 2017) Build in accountability for action to demonstrate commitment to anti-racist agenda vs performative allyship (Deszca et al., 2020; Lopez, 2020)
	3. Develop a vision and strategy			Center the voices of Black students and their families, use data to inform change goals (Dei, 2008; Lewis, 2019)

				Co-create specific change goals and strategy with education partners (Lewis, 2019) Embed continuous critical self-reflection and personal development as a vital component of successful change (Weiner, 2006)
PDSA Model – ongoing community feedback and critical reflection	**NOFS – Own the Issue of Anti-Black Racism** (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)			
	4. Communicate the change vision	December to January	Effective communication is key to change and successful implementation (Caldwell et al., 2012)	Continuous formal and informal communication (Lewis, 2019) should be happening regularly to build awareness and engage partners in courageous conversations about race (Jean-Marie & Mansfield, 2013; Singleton, 2014) Perspectives and insights of partners is used to inform the development of an Equity Leadership Framework to guide school leaders (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021) Formal roll out of the change goals and implementation plan communicated to the community
	NOFS – Frame Intentional and Purposeful Actions (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)			
	5. Empower employees for broad-based action	January to April	Risks (e.g., fear, uncertainty) associated with advocating for and engaging in equity work (Lopez, 2013) Moving from supporting oppression to confronting it	Work with guiding team to ensure alignment of goals and actions Prioritize continued opportunities for dialogue and engagement of education partners throughout (Lopez, 2017; Wallace, 2020) Support school leaders in unlearning and learning opportunities, courageous conversations, mentorship, resources, etc. (Dudar et al., 2017; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Showers & Joyce, 1996)

	6. Generate short term wins		(Adams et al., 1997) Essential to support school leaders in building overall efficacy in equity leadership (Meyer & College, 2021)	Support school leaders in evaluating local circumstances and areas for early gains Monitor actions being taken and use continuous feedback loop to make necessary adjustments along the way Take stock of what is and is not working, and areas where further support may be needed
PDSA Model – ongoing community feedback and critical reflection	**NOFS – Sustaining the Work** (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)			
	7. Consolidate gains and produce more gains	May to June	Center the ethical standards of the teaching profession and the obligation of educators to pay special attention to the inclusion of Black students (OCT, 2021)	Work with guiding team to review actions and assess gains Continue to monitor change actions and engage partners in continued conversations (Fergus, 2019; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021) Combatting racism will be an ongoing journey that must continue with critical self-reflection and constant interrogation of practices (Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2013; Weiner, 2006)
	8. Anchor new approaches in culture	**Planning for Year 2**	Continue to address issues that contribute to the alienation and exclusion of Black students (e.g., lack of resources, adverse treatment, unwillingness to address racism) (James, 2019)	Repeat key messages Evaluate the implementation plan and establish next steps to continue scaling the short-term gains to the broader system (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016; Rosario, 2014; Wallace, 2020) Ongoing goals and actions in working towards vision for a newly imagined education system (Wallace, 2020)

Year 2

- Continue with learning cycle, ensuring that student and family voice is centered in monitoring and evaluation

	XLR8 (Kotter, 2012)	Time Frame	Strategic and Ethical Considerations	Implementation and Communication Strategy
PDSA Model – ongoing community feedback and critical reflection	**NOFS – Naming Anti-Black Racism** (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)			
	1. Establish a sense of urgency 2. Create a guiding coalition 3. Develop a vision and strategy	August to October	Evidence is needed to help partners see the need for change (Odiaga et al., 2021) Culturally responsive leaders must examine their beliefs and values and how these are reflected in their practices (Lopez, 2016; Lumby, 2012)	Reinforce key messaging, incorporating data and feedback previous year to inform direction needed – answer the question, "Why change?" (Deszca et al., 2020) Re-convene guiding coalition to review implementation plan – continue to center student and family voices and perspectives (Singleton, 2022) Organization's belief system informs leaders about the culture and how beliefs and values influence action (Deszca et al., 2020)
	NOFS – Own the Issue of Anti-Black Racism (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)			
	4. Communicate the change vision	Ongoing throughout the year	Effective communication is key to change and successful implementation (Caldwell et al., 2012)	Ensure that vision and strategy is clearly articulated and shared at early start-up meetings for the school year – highlight previous resources and supports available Provide examples and expectations for learning and actions of school leaders
	NOFS – Frame Intentional and Purposeful Actions (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)			
	5. Empower employees for broad-based action 6. Generate short term wins	Ongoing throughout the year	Moving from supporting oppression to confronting it (Adams et al., 1997) Essential to support school leaders in	Continue to work with guiding team to ensure alignment of goals and actions – responsiveness to the Black community (City of Toronto, 2017) Continue to provide learning opportunities that support unlearning and learning opportunities, courageous

			building overall efficacy in equity leadership (Meyer & College, 2021)	conversations, mentorship, resources, etc. (Dudar et al., 2017; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Showers & Joyce, 1996)
	NOFS – Sustaining the Work (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021)			
	7. Consolidate gains and produce more gains	May to June	Center the ethical standards of the teaching profession and the obligation of educators to pay special attention to the inclusion of Black students (OCT, 2021)	Work with guiding team to review actions and assess gains (Deming, 1995) – continue to center student and family voices and perspectives (Khalifa, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021)
	8. Anchor new approaches in culture		Continue to address issues that contribute to the alienation and exclusion of Black students (e.g., lack of resources, adverse treatment, unwillingness to address racism) (James, 2019)	Evaluate the implementation plan and establish next steps to continue scaling the short-term gains to the broader system (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016; Rosario, 2014; Wallace, 2020)