

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & FINAL REPORT

*of the*

## Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion of The Lester B. Pearson School Board



*Putting the Learner First*



# MEMBERS

Dr. Myrna Lashley, Chair  
Nimalan Yoganathan, Representing Tamil Community  
Fariha Naqvi-Mohamed, Representing Muslim Community  
Tiffany Callender, Black Community Leader at Large  
Kemba Mitchell, Representing WIBCA West Island  
Chad Cowie, Representing Indigenous Community  
Matthew Pike, Representing Caucasian Community and Research  
Sabi Hinkson, Representing Academics & the Family  
Felix Robitaille, Representing LGBTQIA2S+  
Colin Jamieson, Representing Disabilities  
Khobee Gibson, Representing SPVM  
Thomas Rhymes, Assistant Director General, LBPSB  
Wusua Mitchell, Elementary School Principal, LBPSB  
Carol James, Teacher, LBPSB (until November 13, 2020)  
Shari Waldrich, Support Staff, LBPSB  
Nathalie Constant, Student Services Consultant, LBPSB  
Sharad Bhargava, Parents Committee Member, LBPSB  
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Finn Poirier, Student Representative



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# JUNE 2021



*of the*

Task Force on  
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion  
of The Lester B. Pearson School Board

*Putting the Learner First*





*“Am I privileged or marginalized? I don’t know. I guess it depends how you look at me. Maybe I am both. What I do know is that, when I am in a position of privilege, I am always happy to learn how I can become a better ally, and when I am in a position of marginality, I am always happy to count on allies to be able to feel safe in my work space.”*

**- Excerpt of a letter to the Task Force**

The purpose of this document is to present the results of deliberations and evidence-based recommendations of the Task Force of Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

# Chapter 1 • Introduction

## 1.1 What is the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB)?

LBPSB oversees 36 elementary schools; 12 secondary schools; and 8 adult education and vocational training centres. Its territory stretches through 32 municipalities from the Vaudreuil-Soulanges area near the Quebec-Ontario border to Verdun in the South-West along the St-Lawrence river and includes 5 boroughs on the island of Montreal. Although the School Board sets the policies, vision and goals for the school district, it does not run individual schools as that duty falls within the responsibilities of the individual school principal or centre director. Thus, each school sets its own tone and ways of daily operation.

## 1.2 What is the LBPSB Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and why was it created?

In the late Spring of 2020, two students at one of the secondary schools coming under the administrative governance of the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) were identified as having created a video which, unfortunately, was based on the vilification of a visible ethno-cultural group. In response, the LBPSB Council of Commissioners released the following statement:

*Events around the world and more recently in our community have brought issues of systemic racism, inequity, and injustice to the fore. The Lester B. Pearson School Board acknowledges that racism exists in society and has longstanding historical roots. The devastating impact of discrimination and racism can no longer be ignored. The Lester B. Pearson School Board denounces racism and discrimination in all forms. Our school board has always been committed to equity, inclusion, and respect for all. We are actively re-examining the ways in which we live these values, the ways we do not, and the work we must do to honour them. We pledge to work together with our community to lead positive change. We commit to undertake actions that will improve the learning and social experiences for the students and communities we serve. As educators, we must take an active role in addressing racism with students and staff. As citizens, we have a responsibility to raise our level of awareness and join in the collective fight for positive social change.*



*We deeply regret the anger and pain generated within our community. Our goal is to learn from this experience and move forward in a positive and constructive manner. We will look to provide our students and staff with opportunities, both in and out of the classroom, to learn about and discuss issues that affect disenfranchised communities and highlight the historical context of these important topics.<sup>1</sup>*

In addition to the above statement, the LBPSB passed the following resolution:

*At the special meeting of the Council of Commissioners on June 22, 2020, the Council passed a resolution, “Declaration of Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination”, that not only reaffirmed the School Board’s anti-racist position, it went further by establishing a Task Force to be comprised of administrators, commissioners, staff, students, parents, and representatives of minority and disenfranchised communities to oversee the development of a comprehensive action plan to address all forms of racism and discrimination in the LBPSB.<sup>2</sup>*

On 15 July 2020, LBPSB asked Dr. Myrna Lashley to head up at a Task Force to be known as the LBPSB Task Force on Equity and Diversity, hereinafter referred to as the Task Force (TF).<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that the TF was not mandated to focus on any specific school but to develop evidence-based recommendations which the school board can present to its schools and which the schools can adapt to their specific populations and needs. However, it is also imperative to recognize that the racist incident in a particular school was a major driving force behind the creation of the TF.

### **1.3 Mandate**

The mandate of the TF was twofold:

1. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and procedures pertaining to addressing and elimination all forms of systemic racism and discrimination; and
2. Produce actionable recommendations to serve as a foundation upon which individual institutions, based on demographic and educational requirements, can build to promote equity and inclusivity for all students and staff.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/council-of-commissioners/task-force-on-equity-and-inclusion>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> The representative of the SPVM, Khobee Gibson, was unable to attend any of the meetings. However, he was made aware that the meeting minutes and other information were always available on the web site of the TF. Also, due to personal reasons Ms. James was unable to attend several meetings. However, as with Mr. Gibson, the information was made available on the website. In this way, the possibility was there for their participation.

This mandate was very particular as it emphasized the fact that addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusivity is not a binary exercise composed of one group versus another but recognizes that there are several areas in human relations where one or more groups view themselves as being superior to others based on stereotypes and prejudice.<sup>4</sup> This position is very much in line with that mentioned in the report entitled *Présentation des résultats des travaux de la Table à l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal Dans le cadre des consultations publiques sur le racisme et les discriminations systémiques*<sup>5</sup> in which it is stated that the term “other” is no longer limited to ‘traditional’ individuals subjected to discrimination such as Indigenous and First Nations peoples; Blacks, refugees and immigrants. On the contrary, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, genders, and persons with varied abilities are also victimized through exclusion in civic spaces. As stated in the report, these types of exclusions are “trans-historical”. In other words, they transcend historical boundaries.

However, focusing on creating solutions to address these areas as single issues would be remiss as such an approach would necessarily ignore the myriad identities of each individual and the lived reality they face on a daily basis. In other words, issues of intersectionality must be taken into consideration. By way of definition, intersectionality

*“is a theoretical framework which maintains that elements such as race and ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and sexuality map onto strata within social hierarchies where they interact and intertwine, resulting in unique identities within, and outcomes for, individuals. Intersectionality includes an explicit awareness and recognition of power, oppression, inequality, and social exclusion. The meaning and significance of these social elements vary across time and space, depending on their social contexts, cultures, and historical periods.”*  
(Muirhead et al., 2020. p.2)<sup>6</sup>

Muirhead et al, adds that recognizing these interactions is not enough, but that concrete ongoing engagements must also be involved. In other words, there must be proposed, and executed, actions to right wrongs.

## 1.4 Areas on which the TF focused

Given the above considerations, the areas on which the TF focused were: *Genders; Sexualities; Abilities; Race and Ethnicities; and Religions.*<sup>7</sup>

LBPSB has several policies to address many of the issues under discussion. For example, there are policies aimed at: the needs of those with different abilities; safe and caring schools; and intercultural education; among others. However, a major issue is whether these policies are

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aclrc.com/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P100/8-100\\_tdild.pdf](https://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P100/8-100_tdild.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Muirhead et al., (2020). What is intersectionality and why is it important in oral health research? Community Dent Oral Epidemiol. pp.1-7. DOI: 10.1111/cdoe.12573

<sup>7</sup> This category is not concerned with the religious beliefs of any individual. We are, however, aware that some individuals suffer discrimination and prejudice because of their real, or assumed faith. Moreover, sometimes, faith and ethnicity are conflated.

perceived by users (ex. Employees, students, parents) to be easily accessible. Perhaps more important questions are: Are users aware of the policies? How comprehensible are they? Is the policy written in a form which invites user participation or is it replete with jargon and leans heavily toward the protection of the institution? Another major issue is whether users feel comfortable in seeking redress, should it be necessary. In other words, are the policies *safely* usable?

The concept of safety is not to be underestimated as persons who find themselves in situations in which they must question organizational precepts, or challenge authority, are often fearful of dismissal or repercussions. This is true in most areas of human interactions where power differentials play a major role. For example: hospital personnel and patients; employer and employee; teachers and students; and even parents and children. Moreover, this is a worldwide phenomenon. By way of illustration, consider that Cullen (2015)<sup>8</sup> states that the Irish Information Commissioner reports that patients are often afraid to complain to authorities about their care because they fear repercussions to themselves and their loved ones. An advice blog curated by Sklover (2012)<sup>9</sup> responds to a person identifying themselves as Eleanor who speaks about being abused in the workplace; aware that she should file a grievance but being afraid because “people more powerful than myself” will conspire to mount a powerful case against her.

There is no reason to assume that users of the educational sector are exempt from these fears as they are, by definition, in vulnerable (none or limited power) positions – parents because of the need to protect their children; employees to protect their jobs; and students, to procure and protect good grades.

## 1.5 Methodology

Using data from Statistics Canada, the TF was able to ascertain the ethnic and religious makeup of all the territories served by the LBPSB. This information was then employed to seek individual representatives of those backgrounds to populate the TF. In addition, it was necessary to ensure that those representing the different sectors of the LBPSB were also included. To do this, contact was made with these groups by asking that the Director General, Dr. Cindy Finn advise the recognized representative of each sector to inform their membership of the search for individuals to serve and to have those interested contact the chair, in writing, to discuss their possible inclusion. It was made clear that an individual's application did not guarantee acceptance, especially in the event that more than one person applied. This was to make sure that the parameters set by the Board were met and that the individual endorsed the mandate and was prepared to work within its boundaries.

<sup>8</sup> Cullen, P. (2015). Patients 'afraid to complain' for fear of repercussions. *The Irish Times*.

<sup>9</sup> Sklover, A.L. (2012). I fear the consequences of filing a complaint; any suggestions? *Sklover working wisdom*.



### **1.5.1 Community members**

The chair solicited the participation of community members by making appeals through media (radio, television, print) and word of mouth.

The chair interviewed every applicant to the TF to make sure they wanted to work within a structure which promoted Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; accepted that the work would be intense; were committed to a three hour formal meeting twice per month; committed to working steadfastly within a subgroup outside of formal meeting hours; understood the necessary to work from an evidence-based perspective and make recommendations based on that perspective; and work with the members of their group to produce a document which would be incorporated into the full and final report.

### **1.5.2 Total**

It was important to keep the number on the TF to a manageable level. Therefore, although it is generally recognized that numbers beyond 10 *could* be problematic, in order to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion, the number was set at 20, including the chair.<sup>10</sup>

Although on the surface this may seem to be broad, the fact that sub-groups were to be established compensated for the larger number and allowed for the following:

- Greater opportunity for genuine diversity;
- Broader range of skill sets;
- Workload sharing across greater numbers;
- Enhancement of analysis and deliberations;
- Ability to cope with absence of members.<sup>11</sup>

No member of the Board or the administration had any input into who was chosen to be on the TF.

### **1.5.3 Establishment of groups**

Although formal meetings of the entire TF were held bi-monthly, gatherings of the sub-groups occurred more frequently and formal upgrades were provided by each group to all members at each bi-monthly assembly. Each sub-group was composed of individuals involved with LBPSB in some capacity, and community members. In order to maintain the independence of the TF, each sub-group was chaired by a community member.

### **1.5.4 Logo**

In order to formally and emotionally demonstrate the independence of the TF from the LBPSB, a logo representing the TF was created and all information related to the TF were to be found under the section represented by that logo on the LBPSB site.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that particular attention was paid to gender parity.

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.governancetoday.com/GT/Articles/What\\_is\\_the\\_optimum\\_Board\\_size.aspx](https://www.governancetoday.com/GT/Articles/What_is_the_optimum_Board_size.aspx)

### 1.5.5 Procedure

Before the first meeting, information was gathered concerning the cultural and ethnic breakdown of the LBPSB territory. Those data are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Ethno-cultural breakdown of population on LBPSB territory.**

MUNICIPALITY	TOT POP	VS POP	VS POP %	% POC / #	% B / #	% A / #
Baie-d'Urfé	3 800	430	11.60%	2.7% / 100	1.2% / 45	1.1% / 40
Beaconsfield	19 300	2 450	12.90%	3.4% / 645	1.9% / 360	0.05% / 100
DDO	48 900	18 700	38.80%	13.5% / 6 500	6.8% / 3 300	0.2% / 100
Dorval	19 000	4 350	23.40%	3.7% / 680	4.3% / 805	1.4% / 260
Hudson	5 200	180	3.50%	0.9% / 45	0.5% / 25	0.5% / 25
Kirkland	20 100	4 800	24.20%	7.3% / 1 445	2.7% / 535	0.5% / 100
Lachine MTL	42 505	10 255	24.10%	3% / 1 500	11% / 4 800	1.5% / 625
Lasalle MTL	75 150	27 845	37.10%	9% / 7 200	15% / 11 400	0.9% / 700
Pfds-Rox MTL	68 800	29 670	43.10%	18% / 12 300	11% / 7 800	0.6% / 420
Pincourt	14 500	2 160	14.90%	2.8% / 395	5.6% / 815	1.3% / 195
Pointe-Claire	31 400	6 600	22.10%	5.4% / 1 635	3.3% / 995	0.7% / 205
St-Télesphore	760	10	1.30%	0 / 10	0 / 0	0 / 0
St-Lazare	19 900	1 300	6.40%	0.9% / 180	1.5% / 290	1.3% / 250
Ste-Anne-de Bellevue	4 900	645	14.40%	5.2% / 230	1.7% / 75	2% / 90
Vaudreuil-Dorion	38 100	7 410	20%	7.3% / 2 705	4.7% / 1 725	0.9% / 325
Verdun MTL	67 300	14 000	20.80%	4% / 2 900	3.8% / 2 600	1.1% / 710
	<b>479 615</b>	<b>130 805</b>	<b>24.60%</b>	<b>8% / 38 470</b>	<b>7.4% / 35 570</b>	<b>0.8% / 4 145</b>

**STATISTIC SOURCES:** Districts without "MTL": <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm?MM=1>  
Districts with "MTL": [http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?\\_pageid=6897,67845597&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=6897,67845597&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

<b>LEGEND</b>	<b>POC</b> = South Asian, Southeast Asian and West Asian <b>B</b> = Black <b>A</b> = Aborigines (*STATCAN terminology prior to this report) <b>% / #</b> = Percent / Total Number <b>TOT POP</b> = Total Population <b>VS POP</b> = Visible Minority Population <b>VS POP %</b> = Visible Minority Percentage	<b>STATCAN DEFINITION OF VISIBLE MINORITY</b> Visible minority refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the <i>Employment Equity Act</i> and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The <i>Employment Equity Act</i> defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

As is shown in table 1, the data break the stereotypes of the LBPSB as lacking cultural and ethnic diversity. It also shows that the diversity is not limited to the areas bounded by the municipalities of Lachine and Verdun, but extends into what is commonly referred to as the West Island and beyond to the border of the province of Ontario. Thus, as it demonstrates, the demographics of the West-Island of Montreal is much more diverse than may be generally assumed. Obviously, not every student will be attending a school within the system of LBPSB as some will be in the French language system and some in private schools. It is, therefore, important to underscore that the data speak to the total population in these districts and not the population of enrolled students.

We also looked at the age distribution (5 - 19) within the territory served by LBPSB. These data are shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Breakdown of individuals aged 5 - 19 living on the territory served by LBPSB.**

MUNICIPALITY	TOT POP	VS POP	VS POP %	AGE 5-19#	AGE 5-19%	LA#	LA%	CHIN#	CHIN%
Baie-d'Urfé	3 800	430	11.60%	790	20.80%	55	1.50%	135	3.60%
Beaconsfield	19 300	2 450	12.90%	4 185	21.70%	195	1%	590	3.10%
DDO	48 900	18 700	38.80%	9 135	18.70%	990	2.10%	1 715	3.60%
Dorval	19 000	4 350	23.40%	2 740	14.40%	675	3.60%	820	4.40%
Hudson	5 200	180	3.50%	820	15.80%	20	0.40%	55	1.10%
Kirkland	20 100	4 800	24.20%	4 045	20%	195	1%	1 440	7.20%
Lachine MTL	42 505	10 255	24.10%	6 005	16.20%	990	2.30%	1 360	3.20%
Lasalle MTL	75 150	27 845	37.10%	11 975	16%	2 620	3.50%	3 755	5%
Pfds-Rox MTL	68 800	29 670	43.10%	13 615	19.80%	1 545	2.20%	2 180	3.20%
Pincourt	14 500	2 160	14.90%	2 960	20.40%	190	1.30%	270	1.90%
Pointe-Claire	31 400	6 600	22.10%	5 280	16.80%	400	1.30%	1 805	5.70%
St-Télesphore	760	10	1.30%	140	18.40%	10	1.30%	0	0.00%
St-Lazare	19 900	1 300	6.40%	4 095	24.60%	155	0.07%	220	1.10%
Ste-Anne-de Bellevue	4 900	645	14.40%	865	17.60%	90	2%	110	2.50%
Vaudreuil-Dorion	38 100	7 410	20%	7 465	19.60%	565	1.50%	315	0.90%
Verdun MTL	67 300	14 000	20.80%	8 155	12.10%	2 545	3.80%	2 990	4.40%
	<b>479 615</b>	<b>130 805</b>	<b>24.60%</b>	<b>83 080</b>		<b>11 240</b>		<b>17 760</b>	

**STATISTIC SOURCES:** Districts without "MTL": <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm?MM=1>  
Districts with "MTL": [http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?\\_pageid=6897,67845597&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=6897,67845597&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

<b>LEGEND</b>	<b>AGE 5-19#</b> = Total number of individuals in age bracket	<b>CHIN#</b> = Number of Chinese minorities
	<b>AGE 5-19%</b> = Percentage of total population in age bracket	<b>CHIN%</b> = Percentage of Chinese minorities
	<b>LA#</b> = Number of Latin American minorities	<b>TOT POP</b> = Total Population
	<b>LA%</b> = Percentage of Latin American minorities	<b>VS POP</b> = Visible Minority Population
		<b>VS POP %</b> = Visible Minority Percentage

As is shown in table 2, the distribution does not merely refer to the population of municipalities but also the ethnic breakdown of the districts.

These data centered the foundations of our evidenced based arguments and recommendations and helped to advocate for a comprehensive report to assist LBPSB and its schools to utilize resources in a manner best suited to promote and encourage the inclusion of even the smallest population of ethno-cultural groupings.

In order to involve the general public in the process, media appearances (radio, television, print) were made by the Chair soliciting the participation of parents, both current and past; students of the LBPSB, current and past students; as well as both current and past employees. An open letter was also placed on the dedicated web space of the TF to that effect.<sup>12</sup> The outreach called for the public to acquaint the TF with issues – both negative and positive – which their children encountered while attending schools under the jurisdiction of Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB). In addition, they were asked to make recommendations to remedy negative situations they highlighted and/or provide support for positive observations. In addition, the Chair made several media appearances to advertise, and report on, the progress of the TF.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/council-of-commissioners/task-force-on-equity-and-inclusion>



### 1.5.6 Meetings

To date there have been 20 formal bi-monthly meetings of the full TF held. During these meetings, although all issues were discussed collectively, members were expected to always present the perspectives of the group they represented (ex. parent, community, principal etc.) particularly in the creation of recommendations. In this manner, focus was maintained on the inclusive nature of the deliberations and assisted in the creation of a comprehensive report.<sup>13</sup>

The minutes of all formal meetings were made available to the public through the dedicated web space, already mentioned.

The TF in general, and the subgroup in particular, undertook to examine what is being done not only in LBPSB, but also elsewhere. This step, and the collection of letters from the community, made sure that data were being collected. Furthermore, having data allows individuals and groups to engage in discussions and make policy and procedural decisions based on verifiable information. Moreover, since everyone was working from the same set of data, it removed some elements of personal interpretations, feelings and biases. Of course, this did not mean that anecdotes would be discounted, but it did provide a foundation which could be employed to decode anecdotes and personal interpretations.

It was determined that all formal recommendations must be evidenced-based, and such evidence must be cited and appropriately referenced. Non-evidenced-based recommendations which, by general consensus, were deemed to be valid would be placed in an addendum.

It should be mentioned that although TF tried in several ways (social media outreach, presentations to adult centres, word of mouth, etc.) to encourage the participation of adult students, it was unable to gather specific substantial information regarding this population. Nonetheless, we did gather enough evidence-based information from school board professionals to include topics of importance to adult students in some of the chapters and recommendations.

## 1.6 Overview of subjects discussed in the report

### 1.6.1 Genders

Gender and sex are often used interchangeably and indeed, they are complementary.<sup>14</sup> However, their interpretation and significance demand different emphases. For clarification, we subscribe to the definitions of sex and gender as stated by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR). Namely: “**Sex** refers to a set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy” and is usually viewed as a binary

<sup>13</sup> Participants brought the same sensitivity to the sub-group to which they were assigned.

<sup>14</sup> University of Minnesota. M Libraries . “Understanding Sex and Gender”. Chapter 11, section 11.1.  
<https://open.lib.umn.edu/sociology/chapter/11-1-understanding-sex-and-gender/>

choice between male and female. Conversely, “**Gender** refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society”.<sup>15</sup>

The above definition allows us to focus on the social and environmental aspects of genders and their intersectionalities with other variables which affect the lives of individuals. This is very important for the well-being of children, especially those who are in the process of questioning their rights associated with genders. This would include how gender is defined, as well as its associated stereotypes. For example, referring to how women are portrayed and referenced in the on-line world of social media, Felmlee, Rodis and Zhang (2020)<sup>16</sup> state that in a review of tweets, they identified 2.9 million tweets in one week (representing 419,000 slurs per day) denigrating women through gendered and sexist language.<sup>17</sup> As pointed out by these investigators, such tweets are meant to condone a strategy which “aim to promote traditional, cultural beliefs about femininity, such as beauty ideals, and they shame victims by accusing them of falling short of these standards.”(p.16) These findings support the research conclusions of Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin and Frame (2005)<sup>18</sup> that girls and boys are exposed to traditional and stereotypical concepts of males and females. Thus, even though both sexes professed their belief in equality, they were of the opinion that they would all experience stereotypical attitudes once entering the workplace. Importantly, in spite of their understanding of what may await them in the workplace, boys and girls continue to display gender typical behaviours. The investigators also point out that the large range of possibilities available to today’s youth may be obscuring the prevalence of stereotypical attitudes. Interestingly, these researchers state that their findings demonstrate that teachers view girls as less confident and more anxious than boys, and boys are more prone to attention-seeking misbehaviour. It is important to underscore that these views often lead to the labelling of children (boys as attention-seeking bullies and girls as meek and lacking in confidence) and that such labelling often has a pervasive and long-lasting effect which influences teacher perceptions and expectations.<sup>19</sup>

The above draws attention to the necessity of awareness of the need to ascertain that gender is not ignored when engaging in conversations and developing strategies to address EDI. We must never forget, as Witt (2000) has shown, that children and youth are heavily influenced by their environment which includes parents, peers, home and school.<sup>20</sup> It is, of course, important to recall that young children will not deal with the issues in the same manner as adolescents. Nor will adolescents, for the most part, be faced with the same concerns as adults.

<sup>15</sup> Government of Canada. Canadian Institutes of Health. “What is gender? What is sex?”. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/48642.html>

<sup>16</sup> Felmlee, Rodis & Zhang (2020). Sexist Slurs: Reinforcing Feminine Stereotypes Online. *Sex Roles* 83: pp.16-28  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01095-z>

<sup>17</sup> e.g. “bitch”, “cunt”, “slut”, or “whore” *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> Tinklin, T., Croxford, L., Ducklin, A., & Frame, B. (2005) Gender and attitudes to work and family roles: the views of young people at the millennium, *Gender and Education*, 17(2). pp. 129-42, DOI: 10.1080/0954025042000301429

<sup>19</sup> Glass, C.S. (2014). Perception of Misbehavior: Understanding the Process of Labeling and the Role of Cultural Capital in the Disciplinary Process. *Urban Rev.* 46. pp. 372-394. DOI: 10.1007/s11256-013-0268-z

<sup>20</sup> Witt, S. D. (2000). The Influence of Peers on Children's Socialization to Gender Roles. *Early Child Development and Care*, 162(1). pp. 1-7, DOI: 10.1080/0300443001620101

Notwithstanding what has been stated above, gender is no longer a binary variable divided into dichotomous states of male and female. Indeed, gender has evolved to encompass the many ways in which individuals, regardless of age, describe and perceive themselves and how that perception leads them to act and to interact with others - including the pronouns they use to identify themselves and how they require others to treat them.

Chapter two, will address the concept of gender as a “hierarchical” social construct which on its own, or coupled with other human characteristics often produces intersected inequalities. The authors make a point of recognizing the work already done by LBPSB but states that there is a need to better educate students and staff about gender identities so that the LBPSB environment can be more inclusive, safe and welcoming to all individuals.

### **1.6.2 Sexualities**

One of the seminal intersections with gender is that of sexuality and one which must also be included in EDI strategic plans, policies and procedures.

The physical and emotional aspects of sexuality are complex and ones which present many challenges for adolescents. Sexuality and identity are closely aligned. For example, Travis, Meginnis and Badari (2000)<sup>21</sup> state that “narrow” definitions of beauty have not only been used to define women’s sexuality, but to exercise many forms of control over female bodies. Given the societal influences to which children and youth are exposed, it is to be expected that many of them will internalize both the positive and negative messages they receive - many of them from the schools they attend. As Borrero, Yeh, Cruz and Suda (2012)<sup>22</sup> stated, school is one of the primary sites where students who are marginalized, regardless of the nature of such marginalization – sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity and so forth, are ‘othered’. SickKids in Toronto has produced a newsletter for parents – in French and English - which highlights what should be said to a child, from early childhood to early adulthood, concerning their sexuality. Of course, discussions of sexuality with children must be tempered by the developmental age of the child.

It is, therefore, being posited that at every stage of a student’s academic life (from kindergarten onward, including adult education), educators need to be vigilant concerning the effects of ‘othering’ including those effects and affects which touch upon students’ understanding of their sexuality.

Regardless of developmental period, SickKids has made it clear that from a young age, children need to be taught “the basic social conventions of privacy, nudity and respect for others in relationships”<sup>23</sup>. (p.1)

<sup>21</sup> Travis, C. B., Meginnis, K. L., & Bardari, K.M. (2000). Beauty, sexuality, and identity: The social control of women. In *Sexuality, society, and feminism*. C. B. Travis & J. W. White (Eds.) pp. 237-272. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, viii, 432 pp.

<sup>22</sup> Yeh, C. J., Borrero, N., Cruz, I., & Suda, J. (2012). School as a Context for "Othering" Youth and Promoting Cultural Assets. *Teachers College Record*. 114. pp. 1-37.

<sup>23</sup> SickKids: AboutKidsHealth (2019). <https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=716&language=English>



Chapter three will address this issue and will provide the reader with a discourse on issues pertaining to the equity, diversity and inclusivity of students with diverse sexualities and sexual identities, including, but not limited to, LGBTQIA2S+. The manner in which students' sexualities intersect with other identification variables will also be highlighted as well as existing school services designed to assist students in this area. The role played by educational institutions in defining how they can contribute to ensuring an anti-oppressive experience at school will also be discussed.

### **1.6.3 Abilities**

An important issue is the many challenges faced by students with specific abilities – both mental and physical – which have been used to 'other' them not only in society, but in the school setting. Teachers have an important role in modelling appropriate behaviours and language when speaking about, or interacting with, this segment of the student population. Cimpian (2010)<sup>24</sup> highlights the necessity of employing correct non-generic language. For example, he makes the point that generic language views everyone in a category as the same (for instance a description of a girl). In other words, generic language does not allow for exceptions to the definition – that is to say, a girl is a girl is a girl and the attributes are stable. As Cimpian states, parents also speak to children using generic language. On the other hand, non-generic language provides for particularities and individualism while removing the expectation and fear of performing poorly because of membership in a specific group. Thus, one can speak of a particular student's abilities without restraining and constraining them to preconceived notions of what it means to be, for example, good at math. As Cimpian has shown, non-generic language is freeing for students and also motivational, as the individual's specific needs and goals outweigh the generic expectations society places on groups.

In chapter four the Abilities subgroup explores issues pertaining to advocacy, policies, neurodiversity, physical disabilities, mental health issues, classroom adaptation, teacher training, and the well-being of adults. Their results and recommendations are proffered in order to promote and sustain an equitable and inclusive environment for stakeholders, while taking into account the varied needs of this rich and diverse community.

### **1.6.4 Race and ethnicities**

Although Cimpian<sup>25</sup> focused his research on the use of generic and non-generic language on students with specific abilities, his findings can also be applied to those of identifiable race and ethnicities; and religions. For example, it has long been recognized that *race* has no biological basis and was created as a way for the dominant group to subjugate others.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, as far as generic language is concerned, one must ask what does it mean to be labelled by racial categories. How are they to be understood and interpreted? In fact, why retain them?

<sup>24</sup> Cimpian, A. (2010). The Impact of Generic Language About Ability on Children's Achievement Motivation. *Developmental Psychology*. 46 (5). pp. 1333-1340.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

<sup>26</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre. <http://www.aclrc.com/race>

*Racism*, however, is very real. As stated by Grosfoguel (2011)<sup>27</sup>, Racism is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human (sic) that have been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world system (sic)” (p.10). The consequences of racism and its effects can be quite dire and destructive up to and including poor physical and mental health.<sup>28•29•30</sup>

Although *Ethnicity* and *Race* are often conflated, an argument could be made that while race is frequently used to identify how people are different, ethnicity often refers to what brings people together and is shared. Thus, two Canadians, regardless of ‘race’ may share more in common that is recognized or admitted by viewing one as black and other white. As with the rest of society, schools must be careful not to assume that racism is only based on dichotomous categories of black and white. This would extend to developing a knowledge of the many cultures represented in the schools, including behaviours and utterances which bring about a sense of inclusion, as well as those which cause pain.

Chapter five focuses on the above issues and highlights six main themes: Anti-racism policy development; standardizing the implementation of the policy while taking into consideration the different social contexts of schools and institutions; mandatory documentation and submission of all cases related to racism; mandatory anti-racism training and professional development; implementation of a restorative justice processes; inclusion of community members in developing and delivering ethno-cultural celebrations.

### 1.6.5 Religions

In undertaking the subject of religion, we were very careful not to enter into the area of governmental curriculum jurisdiction, nor did we engage with the issues of secularity and religiosity. Therefore, as with other areas covered in this report, we focused on students’ sense of inclusion and the influence such inclusion has on an individual’s self-worth and self-esteem. Dupper, Forrest-Bank and Lowry-Carusillo (2015)<sup>31</sup> reports on a study in which students in grades 6-12 recounted incidents in which they were bullied, victimized and subjected to micro-aggressions due to their religious affiliations. Participants also reported that, in some incidents, teachers were also guilty of perpetrating these behaviours. Although this finding is disturbing, it is not surprising as teachers are subject to the same weaknesses and learnings as all of the rest of society.

<sup>27</sup> Grosfoguel, R. (2011). What is Racism? *Journal of World-Systems Research*. 22 (1). DOI: 10.5195/jwsr.2016.609

<sup>28</sup> Medical News Today. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/effects-of-racism>

<sup>29</sup> Harvard Health Publishing “How racism harms children”. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-racism-harms-children-2019091417788>

<sup>30</sup> Trent, M., Dooley, D.G., & Dougé, J. (2019). The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health. *Pediatrics*. 144 (2) e20191765. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1765>

<sup>31</sup> Dupper, D.R., Forrest-Bank, S., & Lowry-Carusillo, A. (2015). Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public School Settings: Findings from Focus Groups Involving Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Unitarian Universalist Youths. *Children & Schools*. 37 (1). pp. 37-45.

There are obviously moral and ethical concerns associated with violating students' human rights based on their religious beliefs, and those need to be addressed. In addition, making students feel ashamed and uncomfortable about an important part of their identity robs them of one of the major protective resources available to them to surmount the very victimization to which they are being subjected. For example, Schaefer et al.,<sup>32</sup> interviewed college students who had been subjected to physical and/or emotional trauma and how they had coped with such incidents. Their results showed that among the protective factors which provided resilience and post-traumatic growth, was positive religious coping which, according to the authors, is not about "broadband" religiosity but about such life skills as seeking guidance, asking for help and learning forgiveness. Given the results of these studies, it is not surprising that both sets of these researchers have suggested that strategies should be put in place to boost all protective factors, including religious tolerance, which will assist children in developing the resilience necessary to become healthy adults. As the researchers suggest, students who are othered in their formative years go on to have issues when it comes to self-esteem and self-worth, as well as how they see the world and their place in it.

In Chapter six, in addition to Atheist/Agnostic and Indigenous Spirituality, topics pertaining to six of the main world religions - Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu - will be highlighted. The focus will be on documented challenges faced by individuals of these faith groups, as well as proposed strategies aimed at assisting LBPSB to support these students.

It is hoped that this report will assist educators, administrators, and support staff in having a fuller understanding of the issues faced by students of LBPSB from kindergarten and into adult education. We also hope that the recommendations contained within these pages will benefit the implementation of strategies to make the schools of LBPSB more emotionally safe and healthy sites for everybody.

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<sup>32</sup> Schaefer et al ., (2018). A concurrent examination of protective factors associated with resilience and post traumatic growth following childhood victimization. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 85 pp. 17-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.08.019>



# Chapter 2 • Genders

## 2.0 Introduction

The Government of Canada defines gender as “the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people.” Additionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) asserts that “gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities.”

In addition to references to community and innovation, the Lester B. Pearson School Board’s Vision Statement specifically identifies these additional core values:

- *Inclusion*: We respect and celebrate diversity.
- *Integrity*: We commit to honesty, equity, and accountability.
- *Respect*: We foster a respectful, nurturing, and safe environment.

Additionally, Section 2.1 of the Lester B. Pearson School Board’s Intercultural Policy states:

*The Lester B. Pearson School Board affirms and promotes the dignity, equality and fundamental worth of all human beings regardless of age, capabilities, ethnic origin, gender or gender identity, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or education background.*

For the Lester B. Pearson School Board to remain true to its core values and to fully commit to the promotion of equity and inclusivity for all students and staff, it must reflect and act upon its current practices with relation to gender. The LBPSB Task Force Genders Subgroup set out to determine if the social construct of gender has produced inequalities within the LBPSB community. The genders subgroup sought to “evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and procedures pertaining to addressing and eliminating all forms of systemic racism and discrimination.” Throughout this investigation there was a major focus on transgender adolescents as they “are an underserved and poorly researched population.” The investigation was not limited to these issues, however, and extended to include gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender binary paradigms.

## **2.1 Challenges faced**

Testimony solicited from the public included accounts from families/students who had experienced challenges and difficulties in LBPSB schools. This testimony came to the subgroup through letters submitted directly to the Task Force in response to its general call to the community at the start of its mandate. It also came via informal social media solicitation initiated by the subgroup itself as well as direct interaction with students. In some cases, parents/students withdrew from schools or from the school system entirely because of their experience. These testimonies highlighted transgendered youth who felt excluded, and unimportant, or as one parent stated, “like an afterthought”.

## **2.2 Optimal learning environments**

The learning environments for these students were not optimal and the failure to create or maintain such an environment must be noted. Promoting gender equality while supporting gender diversity in schools and classrooms is imperative for all students and staff. Providing and sustaining environments where students feel safe, supported and motivated is essential while addressing the needs of every learner. Thus, supporting their academic, social, and emotional growth.

## **2.3 Meeting the needs of Transgender, Nonbinary & Gender Nonconforming youths**

There are simple and attainable means by which the LBPSB and its schools can create a more inclusive environment for gender non-conforming students such as making conscious efforts to address students using their preferred pronouns, addressing students using their chosen names, and using gender neutral language in official documents. Meeting their needs would also include, providing gender neutral spaces such as washrooms and/or change rooms as well as adapting pedagogical approaches and increase LGBTQIA2S+ representation in course content.

## **2.4 Addressing gender stereotypes**

This chapter mainly focused on the barriers that gender binary systems impose on transgender, nonbinary and nonconforming youth. However, it is important to demonstrate that dismantling crippling gender binary systems within the LBPSB is important to the entire LBPSB community, regardless of their gender.

### **2.4.1 Recurring themes**

Solicited community testimony (see above) included feedback from parents frustrated at seeing gender-stereotypes continuously perpetuated in school settings. There were four major recurring themes:

1. *Gender-stereotypes which dictate what is “appropriate” for boys and girls (i.e. colors, hair length, toys, sports teams, wearing nail polish etc.);*
2. *Gender-stereotypes which produce a limiting and narrow understanding of masculinity;*
3. *Gender-stereotypes which produce double-standards;*
4. *Bullying linked to gender and sexuality.*

Research has demonstrated various gender disparities where classroom participation is concerned as teachers unconsciously rely on particular genders as their target or go to responders resulting in unintended gender bias in instructional practices.

### **2.4.2 Toxic masculinity**

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines toxic masculinity as ‘masculine traits and ways of thinking or behaving that negatively impact both men and society as a whole.’ Toxic masculinity begins to manifest at a very young age. Research shows that gender norms are stronger for boys and therefore boys are less willing to cross gender boundaries. This negative behavior must be addressed immediately: In other words, no more saying “boys will be boys.” If we want to ensure that our schools are safe-spaces, and reduce bullying as much as possible, we have to make allies out of our students, therefore we must dismantle “masculinity norms” as they prevent many boys from being allies. Similarly, if a female is exhibiting toxic behavior, her behavior must be immediately addressed as well. This chapter further explores how toxic masculinity expectations are known to hinder male success in school as many young men struggle to cope where masculine norms are concerned. There are gaps in educational attainment as females outnumber males in their first-year college enrollment.

### **2.4.3 Oversexualization of females**

The oversexualization of females, particularly in pop culture and its negative impact on girls' academic, career, and personal development is also problematic. From toys to clothing to media, females are bombarded with stereotypical ideals where gender is concerned. Evidence links sexualization to a variety of harmful consequences which include harm to girls interpersonal relationships, impaired cognitive performance in school. Furthermore, related research suggests that the continuous intake of material (media, social media, music lyrics, video games, magazines, etc.) that is sexually objectifying can contribute to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressive affect, and even physical health problems in high-school-aged girls and in young women.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter placed a great emphasis on raising awareness of the necessity to dismantle the barriers which prevent transgender, nonbinary, and nonconforming youths from having access to an optimal learning environment. It also aimed to highlight that dismantling crippling gender binary systems is important to the entire LBPSB community. Negative effects of gender binary systems can be seen throughout the entire population. One research paper contends that if we continue to adhere to gender stereotypes, the lower a student's academic success will be and that this would be applicable to all genders. The socially constructed idea of gender often confines/restricts individuals. An optimal learning environment is one which fosters growth and allows a child to develop into the best version of themselves. A gender binary school system does not permit this.

# Chapter 3 • Sexualities

## 3.0 Introduction

The third chapter of this report will assess current policies and practices as they relate to the needs and accommodations necessary for students as they develop, learn about and express their sexuality. This chapter addresses students in elementary, high school, and in adult education. Students begin to develop an understanding of their sexual and gendered identities in early childhood, but face many challenges in expressing themselves healthily under the various pressures that affect boys and girls, racialized, religious, gender, and sexual minorities and people with various abilities, in distinct and overlapping ways. These pressures include social attitudes that are learned and reproduced in students that inform how they monitor and control how they and their peers express their masculinity and femininity, pressures from the media and teaching materials they consume, and access to spaces that are either accommodating or hostile to them, in schools, online and beyond.

In reviewing the policies of the school board, the TF has found that, while there is an evident desire and commitment to the values of inclusion, tolerance and diversity, some policies fall short in that they do not name or seek to disrupt the systems that hamper the healthy development of all students, and especially that of marginalized students and gender and sexual minorities - thus, falling short of their goals. The policies reviewed here are the Safe and Caring Schools Policy and the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence policy. The TF has found that these policies, while they do maintain frameworks for providing a certain level of equity, could be expanded upon to cover the gaps that currently exist. The ideologies that harm students and are at the root cause of inequities could be specifically named and more effective strategies could be put in place to better address covert or invisible harms that are perpetuated between students. These strategies include the integration of anti-oppressive teaching techniques in classrooms

and the diversification of learning materials made available to students, so as to confront harmful ideologies before they progress from covert aggressions to overt forms of harassment and bullying. As well, it is of the utmost importance that policies emphasize the value of marginalized, queer, trans and two-spirit students, and a commitment to preventing harms that are specifically carried out against them.

A first step in fulfilling this commitment is to ensure safe spaces are provided for them. It is well understood by queer youth and through research that gender-segregated spaces, namely washrooms and changing rooms, are places where they often feel unsafe, and where the effects of a culture of gendered violence are most apparent. The need to improve access to these spaces for them, as well as (dis)abled students, is also addressed. Accounting for queer students in the design of a communal space allows an opportunity to explicitly accommodate the needs of (dis)abled students, integrating both of these communities into common spaces rather than spaces that are often removed from and invisible to the rest of the student population. With proper design and consideration these spaces can be accommodating and welcoming, and all students will benefit.

In another section, gaps in student knowledge are covered. These are gaps produced about ‘the other’ through indirect means; choices made about what materials are provided for students in each classroom, through generalizations, omissions and distortions about what is normal or universal about varied human experiences, and in generalizing about the ‘other’. The result is that ‘the other’ is incorporated into the definition of normality, instead of being met on their own terms. For students to feel valued in the school environment requires that faculty be aware of these forms of hidden knowledge and how general statements about gender, sex, sexuality, gender roles, gender expression and ‘universal’ ideas about experiences (such as coming out, masculinity and femininity) can be biased. This knowledge can risk carrying more educational significance than what is directly taught in classes, and relates directly to perceptions students have about their identities and those of their peers. The ways classroom materials can represent, or misrepresent the experiences of men and women, how these reinforce assumptions about gender and sexual identity, and especially as these are different for racial, religious, gender and sexual minorities, creates an enormous potential for harm if these materials are not carefully considered. However, while it is important and recommended to use materials that are representative of a diverse student population, simply replacing one set of materials with others does not truly challenge the ways oppressive binaries that govern social norms and divisions have been historically formed and reinforced every day. While one impulse is to counter the gaps in a curriculum with *more knowledge*, trying to correct or replace one curriculum with another that may have fewer gaps, it must be noted that these gaps are actually wonderful tools when used in paradoxical ways. This means to encourage all learners, students and faculty, to lean into discomfort, to allow space for the “productive tension” that is generated as learners resist and engage with knowledge that is challenging and uncomfortable. Rather than try and banish this discomfort and work around it, researchers suggest that this state of “crisis” is where learners are most open to incorporating and internalizing new perspectives, if space is prepared for the uncomfortable and the unpredictable.



We also address the social boundaries that govern divisions behind many identities (racial, ability, gendered) that are deeply entwined in students' perceptions of their sexual identities. These identities determine in many small and big ways how students learn to express themselves, not only in their first romantic relationships, but also casually and in more worrying contexts. These are gaps in student education that can be addressed in sexual education, as well as in a multitude of other contexts, which are covered in this chapter. For a brief overview, the ways young boys and girls are funneled into sexual categories, assumed to be on the path towards 'typical' heterosexual relationships, complicates male perceptions of their masculinity, female perceptions of femininity, and the ways all students navigate both of these. It is difficult for queer, trans, intersex, gender non-conforming and two-spirit students to express their true identities amidst these pressures, as they are marginalized, labelled deviant, ill or impure. However, it is arguably just as difficult for 'normal' students to sustain themselves in the rigid ways defined by social gendered and sexual norms, all in an effort to maintain social capital and keep themselves afloat at school.

Boys must find a place for themselves in the complex constellation of masculinity, risking misogyny, hyper-aggression, difficult social and emotional connections, rejection of femininity, etc. A major consideration is that these may perpetuate higher levels of violence and harassment against their female and gender and sexual minority peers. Even while terms like toxic masculinity are more and more understood, the reality of boys and their relationship to masculinity remains greatly under-examined, and buried under layers of harmful assumptions that do not help them fully realize their potential.

While contemporary ideas about 'girl power' and feminism seem to paint a picture of a post-sexist society, girls are still pushed into navigating the careful line between sexual purity and impropriety. This tension is all the more real while their bodies and moral worth are constantly scrutinized, guarded and controlled by their peers, media, and more. The TF is emphasizing the need to affirm girls' agency in their sexual and gendered identities, expression, and desires.

For Black, Indigenous, Muslim, and other racialized girls, harmful racial ideologies still influence how they and others perceive their sexual development and behaviour. They are seen as more mature than their age, more overtly sexual, and so more scrutinized and policed in their behaviour. They contend with western and colonial notions of purity and deviancy being applied to them while they are exoticised and fetishized, objectified in multiple and intersectional ways, and are continually denied an understanding of their sexual autonomy, sovereignty, on their own terms.

Black and other racialized boys must contend with even more aggressive stereotyping that sees them as more dangerous, more violent and simply irredeemable as compared to their white peers, and this influences their experiences of masculinity.

(Dis)abled students bear a dual burden where they are seen as both desexualized, or like children with no sexual desires, even as this notion that children have no understanding of sexuality is false, or ill, broken, contagious, and unable to fulfill their sexual desires. Typical discourses on sex and sexuality are not equipped to take into account the ways the (dis)abled body utterly challenges sexual norms and binaries that, for example, limit sexual activity to the genitals, to an intimate exercise between two partners, when in reality sexual experiences are much more diverse and expansive.

# Chapter 4 • Abilities

## 4.0 Introduction

The fourth chapter of this report explores areas concerning advocacy, policies, neurodiversity, physical disabilities, mental health issues, classroom adaptation, teacher training, and well-being of students and adults. Through letters submitted to the members of the Task Force, the LBPSB community has shared their experiences, concerns, and suggestions in order to promote and sustain an equitable and inclusive environment for everyone. The Abilities subgroup members also consulted directly with various members of the LBPSB community in order to make recommendations, while taking into account the varied needs of this rich and diverse community.

## 4.1 Diverse abilities of the student population

Students attending LBPSB have a diverse range of abilities and, considering the inclusive nature of its institutions, there is an expectation that the curriculum and professionals live up to the already existing policies. Our subgroup examined 3 areas specifically when drafting the chapter, Advocacy and Neurodiversity, Physical Disabilities and Adaptation, and finally Mental Health and Well-Being.

## 4.2 Advocacy and neurodiversity

The first section on advocacy and neurodiversity started by examining the language used in the current policies and their impact on the different levels of interventions. We started with the education act (section 235) and worked down, finding some antiquated language such as “handicapped” that would warrant updating. Appropriate language specific to the population and individual were found to play an important role in setting the tone for every facet of inclusion. For example, when speaking to an autistic student it is important to know if the student prefers to be referred to as Autistic or a person with Autism. Consulting with the students and advocates were found to be key to the success of proper use of inclusive language as some groups prefer “person with autism” while others do not. Inclusive terminology establishes dignity and respect towards the special needs students and needs to be updated regularly as they evolve. This information should also be included in professional training for employees.

## 4.3 Physical disabilities

In the second section, Physical disabilities and adaptations, we explored section 235 of the Education Act; “all students, regardless of disability or special needs, and that both teaching methods and curriculum should be adapted for the handicapped or otherwise challenged student.” Essentially, all students have the right to access curricula in an environment which meets their learning needs. It was found that the LBPSB Special Needs Policy and Success Plan

indicates forward thinking approaches, frameworks and strategies to support all students. However, it was found lacking in the application of these policies. The TF learned that concerns have been raised by both parents and staff members with regards to the lack of consistency and accountability with regards to the implementation of said policies and what impact that gap has on student success. It was also noticed that the classrooms were not all adapted to students' needs. As examples, science labs are not accessible to students in wheelchairs, elevators do not go to every floor, outdoor play structures are not all inclusive and these are just a few. The idea of inclusivity means more than physical integration into the building. It also means that the buildings be consistently inclusive to students so that they may do more than get through the door.

#### **4.4 Mental health**

In the final section on mental health and well-being, the status and resources available to students and staff in order to maintain a positive state of wellness, were examined. Research has found that the concept of well-being is often dependent on several interrelated factors such as environment, personal goals, abilities, and access to resources to name a few. In fact, research has established a direct negative association between poor levels of mental health and educational outcome. When a safe, caring, and healthy school climate is present, both students and educators, alike, can grow and flourish academically and emotionally. We looked at the different policies such as the safe and caring school, and the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence plans. Although these documents are revised and easily accessible, it was found that they are not always universally known by all staff members.

Supporting staff in the implementation of mental health, well-being, and social and emotional learning strategies positively influences achievement, well-being, and engagement for all concerned. The need for efficient communication of mental health and social emotional learning resources is a much needed upgrade. An improved method of professional development for all staff members which would include peer to peer coaching, follow up and external consulting could also improve the level of wellness felt by both students and staff.

Each of the sections explored found a very solid ideology and policy towards inclusivity at the LBPSB. The very obvious gap in all sections is the implementation and consistent execution of said policies. It was noticed that everything from accessibility, to teacher mindset and administrative support varied greatly from school to school. The lack of follow through and accountability for the gap between the Special needs policies at the LBPSB and the student experience are the focus of the TF recommendations. Bottom line the TF would like to see the LBPSB not only have excellent inclusive policies, but the tools and framework to see them carried out in the spirit with which they were written.

# Chapter 5 • Race and Ethnicities

## 5.0 Introduction

The fifth chapter of this report is focused on exploring and highlighting the Eurocentric biases (a bias which favours views based on European-type ideals over those of non-Western civilizations) present in the institutions and schools in the LBPSB. The Task Force (TF) researched the issues and consequences that these biases have on our students and staff. Although these biases are sometimes subconscious and inherent, they can still have negative effects on the quality of learning and development of self worth and identity. These Eurocentric biases have been linked to stigmatization and stereotyping of certain populations considered living 'below the line'. That is to say, an imaginary horizontal line determining who is privileged and entitled (above the line) and those who are deemed to be subordinate (below the line). We looked to explore these biases and how they affect student and staff populations who, through racial and ethnic definition do not fit into the prescribed mold defined by predominant social norms.

Understanding the vast diversity of our student and staff populations is crucial. Certain differences and lifestyles that come out of these culturally diverse populations can be negatively perceived because of the aforementioned Eurocentric biases. Although the chapter focuses heavily on black and Indigenous populations, it is understood and accepted that any race or ethnicity that is not aligned with the hegemonic colonial ideology will face similar issues of stereotyping and stigmatization. By highlighting the issues faced with black and Indigenous populations we hope to offer an inclusive perspective demonstrating that these issues are faced by all Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) populations in their own respective ways.

## 5.1 The Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence (ABAV) Plan

We found that an important revision of the policies already in place in the LBPSB was necessary. The Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence (ABAV) plan was the document that we felt would be most beneficial to review. Although foundationally sound, the TF noticed gaps in the language and literature that was used in defining incidents. The biggest issue encountered was a lack of concrete definition regarding racially or ethnically related incidents, interaction, attack or micro aggression. If one of these incidents occurred, there was no protocol to define it and no protocol outlining the remedial steps to address such a sensitive matter. We discovered this omission left our marginalized student and staff populations vulnerable to these incidents and allowed the potential of recurrence. Without a definition, documentation and assessment of these incidents could not be measured.

## 5.2 Lack of documentation

The lack of documentation was another gap we observed in our research. Without quantifiable measurement of these incidents it is impossible to be able to judge the frequency, or lack thereof, of incidents regarding race and ethnicities. This information would prove to be crucial in judging the safety and sense of belonging of all of our staff and student populations in the LBPSB. A population already marginalized would be further disadvantaged without proper documentation of these incidents because they would have to rely on ‘hearsay’ evidence while confronting the aforementioned Eurocentric biases. In our research we also looked to address some of the root causes of the Eurocentric biases.

### 5.2.1 *Need for professional development*

The TF discovered these Eurocentric biases did not necessarily come from a malicious intent but from an inherent and unintentional bias. We noticed that this was due to a lack of professional development. By reviewing contemporary and North American examples of professional development that targeted staff and students in an educational institution, we concluded that this emphasis on education was the most efficient way in an attempt to eliminate the biases. A letter we received through our TF board meetings was the positive reception of staff and students to these educational workshops. We became aware that these populations are eager and willing to learn. We concluded that in order to educate on these topics, an important understanding of the issues is required.

#### 5.2.1.1 *Importance of understand different familial structures*

Using academic and anecdotal evidence from the community we identified some issues faced by our BIPOC student and staff populations. Black students face much higher suspension rates when compared to white students; black students were almost 4 times more likely to be expelled than white students. Black students received two times fewer “excellent” ratings when compared to white students despite similar standardized test scores. Anecdotal evidence from the community also emphasized that black families did not feel as welcomed or understood during interactions with staff members because of these biases. For example, a “multimother” kinship structure common with families in the black community could be negatively stereotyped despite the evidence of the efficacy of the multi guardian role (older sisters, aunts, grandparents showing up to meetings in the place of the mother). These culturally different methods of parenting receive negative reception because of these Eurocentric biases. As a result, this can be problematic to families of any culture that do not fit the nuclear family model.



### **5.3 Understanding Indigenous cultures**

Indigenous populations run the risk of a lack of emphasis on their differences in culture. For example, we found that Indigenous populations have been lumped together in a general category. This does not appreciate the richness and differences between their cultures such as Cree, Inuit and Algonquin populations. Anecdotal evidence allowed us to understand how destructive these over-generalizations can be on the mental health and feeling of self expression for Indigenous populations. Particular sensitivity to the hardships faced by Indigenous populations is crucial to them feeling welcome and appreciated.

### **5.4 Researching alternative methods of discipline**

When examining these issues it is also important to understand how the current disciplinary systems affect marginalized populations. The TF observed that too much emphasis was given to punitive disciplinary practices. We discovered that punitive practices have unproportional negative effects on racialized populations. Through research into restorative justice techniques, we understood that a shift from punitive practices to restorative practices would benefit and ensure the safety and care of racialized populations. We concluded that exclusionary disciplinary measures for managing student and staff behavior (expulsions, school transfers, and police intervention) are harmful practices.

### **5.5 The need to celebrate cultures**

Finally, through anthropological, sociological and anecdotal evidence we understood the need for racial and ethnic celebrations that would allow all populations to feel they mattered. Even the smallest mention of the appreciation of an individual's culture has been proven to have immense positive effects on their confidence, feeling of inclusion and acceptance of expression of self identity. The TF understood that in order to properly offer these celebrations, a deep understanding of them was necessary. Community outreach to understand what is important to the particular population in terms of racial and ethnic celebrations would be very important for these practices to be successful.

## 5.6 Addressing gaps in the application of policies

In addressing the issues and gaps in the LBPSB practices the TF concluded that in order to provide a comprehensive report these issues require the deepest attention. These issues can be summarized as follows into 6 defining themes:

1. *Lack of defined protocol and remedial steps for a racially or ethnically charged incident;*
2. *Lack of documentation and metrics that would allow a reality of the incidents faced by racialized populations;*
3. *Immense importance of staff professional development to address Eurocentric biases and understand issues faced by racialized populations;*
4. *Educating students to address Eurocentric biases and understand issues faced by racialized populations;*
5. *Work on reduction of disproportional representation of racialized populations in disciplinary policies that focus on a punitive model; and*
6. *The importance of celebrating and appreciating diverse racialized populations in the LBPSB.*

# Chapter 6 • Religion

## 6.0 Introduction

A student's religious beliefs influence their sense of identity as well as their mental and emotional health. Students who are stigmatized for their beliefs and practices in their formative years go on to have issues when it comes to self-esteem, self-worth as well as how they see the world. Teachers in LBPSB schools require additional professional development and coaching on how to talk about religions to students without reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

## 6.1 Buddhism

In general, Buddhism is highly regarded in North America, with the practices of meditation and mindfulness and the profile of the Dalai Lama. However, it is important to apply an intersectional framework to understand the interconnection between Anti-Asian racism and anti-Buddhist discrimination as many Buddhists are of East Asian descent. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent Anti-Asian rhetoric of some politicians, Anti-Asian racism has now become prevalent in both the USA and Canada. There have been several high-profile incidents such as the Atlanta shootings, and an increase in hate crimes and violent attacks on Asian people in public spaces.

## 6.2 Christianity

Research suggests that Christian students who demonstrate their faith within non-predominantly Christian School environments are often perceived as deviant and inferior, ‘holier than thou’, being stereotyped or marginalized because of their faith practices, and seen as the ‘other’ (Dupper et al.). Studies suggest that the rate of discriminatory incidents against Christian students increases when combined with an intersectional identity element such as minority status (i.e. race, class, etc.). Christian students who also possess a minority status are more likely to face microaggressions and even violent attacks (Dupper et al.).

## 6.3 Hinduism

As a minority community, Hindus in the Indian diaspora face discrimination in many different countries around the world. In North America there have been several different types of discrimination:

In the 1970s and 1980s in Canada, Hindus most of whom are of South Asians descent were often called ‘Paki’. In a letter from the community sent to the Task Force, a student noted: *“From elementary to high school, more times than I could count, I was bullied. Called a ‘Paki’, ‘smelly’ and a variety of other things, by other students.*

## 6.4 Indigenous spirituality

There is an inherent limitation in the sense that the focus for this subcommittee is the impact *Religion* has on the student experience. The limitation is found in that Indigenous *Spirituality* is intertwined within Indigenous philosophy - one cannot explore spirituality in an Indigenous context without taking a more holistic approach and examining the Indigenous experience more globally. Even then, further limitations exist in that various Indigenous groups have their own practices, experience and needs. As such, the spirit of the research listed below is compiled with the basal understanding that Indigenous Spirituality (and not religion, as this is not a Western perspective that we are researching) is entrenched in Indigenous practice/reality and cannot reasonably be extracted from or examined outside the Indigenous experience.

## 6.5 Islam

A large body of research has examined how especially in the post-9/11 context, Muslim students have experienced a significant amount of Islamophobia. Islamophobia in schools manifests both through overtly racist comments as well as systemic forms of racism including Orientalist (defined as the representation of Asia, especially the Middle East, in a stereotyped way that is regarded as embodying a colonialist attitude) as per the Oxford dictionary; depictions within course material and library books. Studies have shown that stereotypical and negative representations of the ‘threatening’ Muslim ‘Other’ have appeared in textbooks across Quebec secondary schools. It is critical to situate these studies in the wider context of the dominant public’s perceptions of Muslim communities in Quebec.

## 6.6 Judaism

Jewish students continue to deal with Anti-Semitism and discrimination. Many Jewish parents therefore feel that they must enroll their Jewish children into Jewish schools to allow them to embrace their roots and practice their faith. An estimated 70% of Jewish students are educated in private schools in France. Similar practices are found in Montreal. Jewish parents wish to both protect their children from the detrimental and traumatic affects of Anti-Semitism while educating their children in their Jewish culture and faith. Jewish students are afraid to embrace their identity out of fear of any backlash.

## 6.7 Sikhism

Although Sikhism is the world's fifth largest religion there is still a significant lack of knowledge about Sikh identity and religious philosophies within dominant white society in North America. Because the Sikh turban (referred to as a *pagri* or *patka*) commonly worn by men and boys is an ostentatious religious symbol, Sikhs living in the global North have become targets of racism ranging from micro-aggressions to hate speech as well as white supremacist terrorist attacks.

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*We invite you to read the full report,  
which provides more details, including  
all the recommendations of the Task Force.*

# FINAL REPORT

# JUNE 2021



*of the*  
Task Force on  
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion  
of The Lester B. Pearson School Board

# Putting the Learner First





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 Tiffany Callender, Black Community Leader at Large  
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 Chad Cowie, Representing Indigenous Community  
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 Khobee Gibson, Representing SPVM  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter 1 • Introduction

1.1	What is the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB)?	35
1.2	What is the LBPSB Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and why was it created?	35
1.3	Mandate	36
1.4	Areas on which the TF focused	37
1.5	Methodology	38
1.5.1	Community members	39
1.5.2	Total	39
1.5.3	Establishment of groups	39
1.5.4	Logo	39
1.5.5	Procedure	40
1.5.6	Meetings	42
1.6	Overview of subjects discussed in the report	42
1.6.1	Genders	42
1.6.2	Sexualities	44
1.6.3	Abilities	45
1.6.4	Race and ethnicities	45
1.6.5	Religions	46

## Chapter 2 • Genders

2.0	Introduction	48
2.1	Optimal learning environments	49
2.1.1	Addressing gender stereotypes is important for the entire LBPSB community	50
2.1.2	Toxic masculinity	51
2.1.3	Recommendations	53
2.2	How do we meet the needs of Transgender, Nonbinary & Gender Nonconforming youths?	54
2.2.1	Recommendation	55
2.2.2	Recommendation	56
2.3	Inconsistencies in the gender language that is used in LBPSB By-Laws	57
2.3.1	Recommendations	57
2.4	Make the environment inclusive & safe	58
2.4.1	Increase representation in presented content: Representation Matters	58
2.4.2	Recommendation	58
2.5	Educate the community about the Transgender, Nonbinary & Gender Nonconforming community	59
2.5.1	Recommendation	59
2.5.2	Recommendations	59
2.5.3	Recommendations	60
2.6	Access to the proper spaces	61
2.6.1	Recommendations	61
2.6.2	Recommendations	62
2.7	Addressing disciplinary and policy double-standards and biases in school settings	63
2.7.1	Recommendations	64
2.7.2	Recommendations	65
2.8	Bullying linked to gender and sexuality	66
2.8.1	Recommendations	66
2.8.2	Recommendations	67
2.9	Conclusion	67

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter 3 • Sexualities

3.0	Introduction .....	69
3.1	School policies .....	70
3.1.1	Recommendation .....	71
3.1.2	Recommendation .....	71
3.2	Sexual and gendered violence .....	72
3.2.1	Historical influences of gender expressions .....	72
3.2.1.1	Masculine sexuality stereotypes .....	74
3.2.1.2	Feminine sexuality stereotypes .....	75
3.2.1.3	Sexuality, race and ethnicity .....	76
3.2.1.4	Creation of policies addressing harmful ideologies .....	77
3.2.1.5	Recommendation .....	78
3.2.1.6	Recommendation .....	78
3.3	Safe facilities .....	79
3.3.1	Recommendation .....	79
3.3.2	Recommendation .....	79
3.4	Physical education and changing rooms .....	80
3.4.1	Recommendation .....	80
3.4.2	Recommendation .....	80
3.5	Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or Friendship, Love and Sexual Health (FLASH) groups .....	80
3.5.1	Recommendation .....	81
3.5.2	Recommendation .....	81
3.6	Bullying .....	82
3.6.1	Sexuality and bullying .....	82
3.6.2	Bullying as a social act .....	84
3.6.2.1	Recommendation .....	85
3.7	Bullying, sexuality and pedagogy .....	85
3.7.1	Recommendation .....	88
3.7.2	Recommendation .....	88
3.7.3	Recommendation .....	88
3.7.4	Recommendation .....	88
3.8	Professional development .....	88
3.8.1	Recommendation .....	88

## Chapter 4 • Abilities

4.0	Mandate of abilities subgroup .....	89
4.1	Advocacy and neurodiversity .....	89
4.1.1	Recommendations .....	91
4.2	Physical disability and adaptations .....	91
4.2.1	Recommendations .....	93
4.3	Mental health and well-being .....	93
4.4	Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) .....	95
4.4.1	Recommendations .....	96
4.5	Staff training and professional development .....	97
4.5.1	Recommendations .....	99

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter 5 • Race and Ethnicities

5.0	Introduction .....	100
5.1	Compulsory policy/document for anti-racism that is standardized .....	101
5.1.1	Recommendations .....	101
5.2	Mandatory documentation and submissions of all cases related to racism .....	101
5.2.1	Recommendations regarding the implementation of tasks or goals to judge practicability and success rate of policies .....	101
5.3	Mandatory training and professional development .....	101
5.4	Constitutional right of Indigenous identity and overview of issues faced by marginalized populations .....	102
5.4.1	Recommendations .....	104
5.5	Overview of issues faced by Black communities .....	104
5.5.1	Reality of anti-Black racism in Canada .....	105
5.6	Overview of issues faced by South Asian ethnic communities .....	106
5.6.1	Reality of anti-South Asian racism in Canada .....	106
5.7	An overview of restorative justice practices in schools and educational institutions .....	107
5.7.1	Zero-tolerance and exclusionary, punitive discipline .....	107
5.7.2	Community resources promoting restorative justice practices .....	109
5.7.3	Recommendations for a move away from punitive discipline to a restorative justice approach .....	109
5.8	Further encouragement of diversity and inclusion .....	110
5.8.1	Recommendations regarding encouragement of diversity and inclusion .....	110
5.9	Conclusion .....	111
5.9.1	Themes .....	111

## Chapter 6 • Religions

6.0	Overview .....	112
6.1	Buddhism .....	112
6.1.1	Research and findings .....	112
6.2	Christianity .....	113
6.2.1	Research and findings .....	113
6.3	Hinduism .....	114
6.3.1	Research and findings .....	114
6.3.2	Racial slurs .....	115
6.3.3	Vandalism against temples .....	115
6.3.4	Portrayal of Hinduism in textbooks .....	115
6.4	Indigenous spirituality .....	115
6.4.1	Research and findings .....	115
6.4.1.1	Issues Indigenous students face .....	116
6.5	Islam .....	116
6.5.1	Research and findings .....	116
6.5.1.1	Recent examples of Islamophobia in Montreal schools .....	117
6.5.1.2	Racist representations in mainstream media .....	118
6.5.1.3	Fostering belonging .....	118
6.6	Judaism .....	118
6.6.1	Jewish students may be afraid to embrace their identity out of fear of any backlash .....	118
6.7	Sikhism .....	119
6.7.1	Research and findings .....	119
6.8	Recommendations .....	120
6.8.1	Recommendations regarding Buddhist students .....	120

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

6.8.2	Recommendations regarding Christian students .....	121
6.8.3	Recommendations regarding Hinduism .....	123
6.8.4	Recommendations regarding Indigenous spirituality.....	124
6.8.5	Recommendations regarding Muslim students .....	126
6.8.6	Recommendations regarding Jewish students.....	127
6.8.7	Recommendations regarding Sikh students.....	127
6.9	General Recommendations (from members of our sub-committee, not based on empirical evidence).....	128

## Chapter 7 • Conclusion

Discussion .....	129
Importance of evidence .....	129
The long play.....	130
The value of healthy LBPSB relationships .....	130
Diversity, inclusivity and intersectionality.....	130
Conclusion.....	131

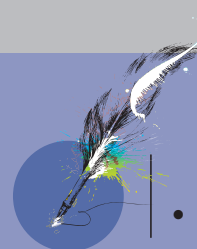
## Annex A

Community Resources .....	132
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# Chapter 1 • Introduction



Written by:  
• Dr. Myrna Lashley

*“Am I privileged or marginalized? I don’t know. I guess it depends how you look at me. Maybe I am both. What I do know is that, when I am in a position of privilege, I am always happy to learn how I can become a better ally, and when I am in a position of marginality, I am always happy to count on allies to be able to feel safe in my work space.”*

**- Excerpt of a letter to the Task Force**

The purpose of this document is to present the results of deliberations and evidence-based recommendations of the Task Force of Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

## 1.1 What is the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB)?

LBPSB oversees 36 elementary schools; 12 secondary schools; and 8 adult education and vocational training centres. Its territory stretches through 32 municipalities from the Vaudreuil-Soulanges area near the Quebec-Ontario border to Verdun in the South-West along the St-Lawrence river and includes 5 boroughs on the island of Montreal. Although the School Board sets the policies, vision and goals for the school district, it does not run individual schools as that duty falls within the responsibilities of the individual school principal or centre director. Thus, each school sets its own tone and ways of daily operation.

## 1.2 What is the LBPSB Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and why was it created?

In the late Spring of 2020, two students at one of the secondary schools coming under the administrative governance of the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) were identified as having created a video which, unfortunately, was based on the vilification of a visible ethno-cultural group. In response, the LBPSB Council of Commissioners released the following statement:

*Events around the world and more recently in our community have brought issues of systemic racism, inequity, and injustice to the fore. The Lester B. Pearson School Board acknowledges that racism exists in society and has longstanding historical roots. The devastating impact of discrimination and racism can no longer be ignored. The Lester B. Pearson School Board denounces racism and discrimination in all forms. Our school board has always been committed to equity, inclusion, and respect for all. We are actively re-examining the ways in which we live these values, the ways we do not, and the work we must do to honour them. We pledge to work together with our community to lead positive change. We commit to undertake actions that will improve the learning and social experiences for the students and communities we serve. As educators, we must take an active role in addressing racism with students and staff. As citizens, we have a responsibility to raise our level of awareness and join in the collective fight for positive social change.*

*We deeply regret the anger and pain generated within our community. Our goal is to learn from this experience and move forward in a positive and constructive manner. We will look to provide our students and staff with opportunities, both in and out of the classroom, to learn about and discuss issues that affect disenfranchised communities and highlight the historical context of these important topics.*<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the above statement, the LBPSB passed the following resolution:

*At the special meeting of the Council of Commissioners on June 22, 2020, the Council passed a resolution, “Declaration of Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination”, that not only reaffirmed the School Board’s anti-racist position, it went further by establishing a Task Force to be comprised of administrators, commissioners, staff, students, parents, and representatives of minority and disenfranchised communities to oversee the development of a comprehensive action plan to address all forms of racism and discrimination in the LBPSB.*<sup>34</sup>

On July 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, LBPSB asked Dr. Myrna Lashley to head up at a Task Force to be known as the LBPSB Task Force on Equity and Diversity, hereinafter referred to as the Task Force (TF).<sup>35</sup>

It is important to note that the TF was not mandated to focus on any specific school but to develop evidence-based recommendations which the school board can present to its schools and which the schools can adapt to their specific populations and needs. However, it is also imperative to recognize that the racist incident in a particular school was a major driving force behind the creation of the TF.

### **1.3 Mandate**

The mandate of the TF was twofold:

1. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and procedures pertaining to addressing and elimination all forms of systemic racism and discrimination; and
2. Produce actionable recommendations to serve as a foundation upon which individual institutions, based on demographic and educational requirements, can build to promote equity and inclusivity for all students and staff.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/council-of-commissioners/task-force-on-equity-and-inclusion>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> The representative of the SPVM, Khobee Gibson, was unable to attend any of the meetings. However, he was made aware that the meeting minutes and other information were always available on the web site of the TF. Also, due to personal reasons Ms. James was unable to attend several meetings. However, as with Mr. Gibson, the information was made available on the website. In this way, the possibility was there for their participation.

This mandate was very particular as it emphasized the fact that addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusivity is not a binary exercise composed of one group versus another but recognizes that there are several areas in human relations where one or more groups view themselves as being superior to others based on stereotypes and prejudice.<sup>36</sup> This position is very much in line with that mentioned in the report entitled *Présentation des résultats des travaux de la Table à l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal Dans le cadre des consultations publiques sur le racisme et les discriminations systémiques*<sup>37</sup> in which it is stated that the term “other” is no longer limited to ‘traditional’ individuals subjected to discrimination such as Indigenous and First Nations peoples; Blacks, refugees and immigrants. On the contrary, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, genders, and persons with varied abilities are also victimized through exclusion in civic spaces. As stated in the report, these types of exclusions are “trans-historical”. In other words, they transcend historical boundaries.

However, focusing on creating solutions to address these areas as single issues would be remiss as such an approach would necessarily ignore the myriad identities of each individual and the lived reality they face on a daily basis. In other words, issues of intersectionality must be taken into consideration. By way of definition, intersectionality

*“is a theoretical framework which maintains that elements such as race and ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and sexuality map onto strata within social hierarchies where they interact and intertwine, resulting in unique identities within, and outcomes for, individuals. Intersectionality includes an explicit awareness and recognition of power, oppression, inequality, and social exclusion. The meaning and significance of these social elements vary across time and space, depending on their social contexts, cultures, and historical periods.”*  
(Muirhead et al., 2020. p.2)<sup>38</sup>

Muirhead et al, adds that recognizing these interactions is not enough, but that concrete ongoing engagements must also be involved. In other words, there must be proposed, and executed, actions to right wrongs.

## 1.4 Areas on which the TF focused

Given the above considerations, the areas on which the TF focused were: *Genders; Sexualities; Abilities; Race and Ethnicities; and Religions.*<sup>39</sup>

LBPSB has several policies to address many of the issues under discussion. For example, there are policies aimed at: the needs of those with different abilities; safe and caring schools; and intercultural education; among others. However, a major issue is whether these policies are

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.aclrc.com/>

<sup>37</sup> [https://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P100/8-100\\_tdild.pdf](https://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P100/8-100_tdild.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Muirhead et al., (2020). What is intersectionality and why is it important in oral health research? Community Dent Oral Epidemiol. pp.1-7. DOI: 10.1111/cdoe.12573

<sup>39</sup> This category is not concerned with the religious beliefs of any individual. We are, however, aware that some individuals suffer discrimination and prejudice because of their real, or assumed faith. Moreover, sometimes, faith and ethnicity are conflated.

perceived by users (ex. Employees, students, parents) to be easily accessible. Perhaps more important questions are: Are users aware of the policies? How comprehensible are they? Is the policy written in a form which invites user participation or is it replete with jargon and leans heavily toward the protection of the institution? Another major issue is whether users feel comfortable in seeking redress, should it be necessary. In other words, are the policies *safely* usable?

The concept of safety is not to be underestimated as persons who find themselves in situations in which they must question organizational precepts, or challenge authority, are often fearful of dismissal or repercussions. This is true in most areas of human interactions where power differentials play a major role. For example: hospital personnel and patients; employer and employee; teachers and students; and even parents and children. Moreover, this is a worldwide phenomenon. By way of illustration, consider that Cullen (2015)<sup>40</sup> states that the Irish Information Commissioner reports that patients are often afraid to complain to authorities about their care because they fear repercussions to themselves and their loved ones. An advice blog curated by Sklover (2012)<sup>41</sup> responds to a person identifying themselves as Eleanor who speaks about being abused in the workplace; aware that she should file a grievance but being afraid because “people more powerful than myself” will conspire to mount a powerful case against her.

There is no reason to assume that users of the educational sector are exempt from these fears as they are, by definition, in vulnerable (none or limited power) positions – parents because of the need to protect their children; employees to protect their jobs; and students, to procure and protect good grades.

## 1.5 Methodology

Using data from Statistics Canada, the TF was able to ascertain the ethnic and religious makeup of all the territories served by the LBPSB. This information was then employed to seek individual representatives of those backgrounds to populate the TF. In addition, it was necessary to ensure that those representing the different sectors of the LBPSB were also included. To do this, contact was made with these groups by asking that the Director General, Dr. Cindy Finn advise the recognized representative of each sector to inform their membership of the search for individuals to serve and to have those interested contact the chair, in writing, to discuss their possible inclusion. It was made clear that an individual's application did not guarantee acceptance, especially in the event that more than one person applied. This was to make sure that the parameters set by the Board were met and that the individual endorsed the mandate and was prepared to work within its boundaries.

<sup>40</sup> Cullen, P. (2015). Patients 'afraid to complain' for fear of repercussions. *The Irish Times*.

<sup>41</sup> Sklover, A.L. (2012). I fear the consequences of filing a complaint; any suggestions? *Sklover working wisdom*.

### **1.5.1 Community members**

The chair solicited the participation of community members by making appeals through media (radio, television, print) and word of mouth.

The chair interviewed every applicant to the TF to make sure they wanted to work within a structure which promoted Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; accepted that the work would be intense; were committed to a three hour formal meeting twice per month; committed to working steadfastly within a subgroup outside of formal meeting hours; understood the necessary to work from an evidence-based perspective and make recommendations based on that perspective; and work with the members of their group to produce a document which would be incorporated into the full and final report.

### **1.5.2 Total**

It was important to keep the number on the TF to a manageable level. Therefore, although it is generally recognized that numbers beyond 10 *could* be problematic, in order to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion, the number was set at 20, including the chair.<sup>42</sup>

Although on the surface this may seem to be broad, the fact that sub-groups were to be established compensated for the larger number and allowed for the following:

- Greater opportunity for genuine diversity;
- Broader range of skill sets;
- Workload sharing across greater numbers;
- Enhancement of analysis and deliberations;
- Ability to cope with absence of members.<sup>43</sup>

No member of the Board or the administration had any input into who was chosen to be on the TF.

### **1.5.3 Establishment of groups**

Although formal meetings of the entire TF were held bi-monthly, gatherings of the sub-groups occurred more frequently and formal upgrades were provided by each group to all members at each bi-monthly assembly. Each sub-group was composed of individuals involved with LBPSB in some capacity, and community members. In order to maintain the independence of the TF, each sub-group was chaired by a community member.

### **1.5.4 Logo**

In order to formally and emotionally demonstrate the independence of the TF from the LBPSB, a logo representing the TF was created and all information related to the TF were to be found under the section represented by that logo on the LBPSB site.

<sup>42</sup> It is important to note that particular attention was paid to gender parity.

<sup>43</sup> [https://www.governancetoday.com/GT/Articles/What\\_is\\_the\\_optimum\\_Board\\_size.aspx](https://www.governancetoday.com/GT/Articles/What_is_the_optimum_Board_size.aspx)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter 3 • Sexualities

3.0	Introduction .....	69
3.1	School policies .....	70
3.1.1	Recommendation .....	71
3.1.2	Recommendation .....	71
3.2	Sexual and gendered violence .....	72
3.2.1	Historical influences of gender expressions .....	72
3.2.1.1	Masculine sexuality stereotypes .....	74
3.2.1.2	Feminine sexuality stereotypes .....	75
3.2.1.3	Sexuality, race and ethnicity .....	76
3.2.1.4	Creation of policies addressing harmful ideologies .....	77
3.2.1.5	Recommendation .....	78
3.2.1.6	Recommendation .....	78
3.3	Safe facilities .....	79
3.3.1	Recommendation .....	79
3.3.2	Recommendation .....	79
3.4	Physical education and changing rooms .....	80
3.4.1	Recommendation .....	80
3.4.2	Recommendation .....	80
3.5	Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or Friendship, Love and Sexual Health (FLASH) groups .....	80
3.5.1	Recommendation .....	81
3.5.2	Recommendation .....	81
3.6	Bullying .....	82
3.6.1	Sexuality and bullying .....	82
3.6.2	Bullying as a social act .....	84
3.6.2.1	Recommendation .....	85
3.7	Bullying, sexuality and pedagogy .....	85
3.7.1	Recommendation .....	88
3.7.2	Recommendation .....	88
3.7.3	Recommendation .....	88
3.7.4	Recommendation .....	88
3.8	Professional development .....	88
3.8.1	Recommendation .....	88

## Chapter 4 • Abilities

4.0	Mandate of abilities subgroup .....	89
4.1	Advocacy and neurodiversity .....	89
4.1.1	Recommendations .....	91
4.2	Physical disability and adaptations .....	91
4.2.1	Recommendations .....	93
4.3	Mental health and well-being .....	93
4.4	Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) .....	95
4.4.1	Recommendations .....	96
4.5	Staff training and professional development .....	97
4.5.1	Recommendations .....	99

**Table 2: Breakdown of individuals aged 5 - 19 living on the territory served by LBPSB.**

MUNICIPALITY	TOT POP	VS POP	VS POP %	AGE 5-19#	AGE 5-19%	LA#	LA%	CHIN#	CHIN%
Baie-d'Urfé	3 800	430	11.60%	790	20.80%	55	1.50%	135	3.60%
Beaconsfield	19 300	2 450	12.90%	4 185	21.70%	195	1%	590	3.10%
DDO	48 900	18 700	38.80%	9 135	18.70%	990	2.10%	1 715	3.60%
Dorval	19 000	4 350	23.40%	2 740	14.40%	675	3.60%	820	4.40%
Hudson	5 200	180	3.50%	820	15.80%	20	0.40%	55	1.10%
Kirkland	20 100	4 800	24.20%	4 045	20%	195	1%	1 440	7.20%
Lachine MTL	42 505	10 255	24.10%	6 005	16.20%	990	2.30%	1 360	3.20%
Lasalle MTL	75 150	27 845	37.10%	11 975	16%	2 620	3.50%	3 755	5%
Pfds-Rox MTL	68 800	29 670	43.10%	13 615	19.80%	1 545	2.20%	2 180	3.20%
Pincourt	14 500	2 160	14.90%	2 960	20.40%	190	1.30%	270	1.90%
Pointe-Claire	31 400	6 600	22.10%	5 280	16.80%	400	1.30%	1 805	5.70%
St-Télesphore	760	10	1.30%	140	18.40%	10	1.30%	0	0.00%
St-Lazare	19 900	1 300	6.40%	4 095	24.60%	155	0.07%	220	1.10%
Ste-Anne-de Bellevue	4 900	645	14.40%	865	17.60%	90	2%	110	2.50%
Vaudreuil-Dorion	38 100	7 410	20%	7 465	19.60%	565	1.50%	315	0.90%
Verdun MTL	67 300	14 000	20.80%	8 155	12.10%	2 545	3.80%	2 990	4.40%
	<b>479 615</b>	<b>130 805</b>	<b>24.60%</b>	<b>83 080</b>		<b>11 240</b>		<b>17 760</b>	

**STATISTIC SOURCES:** Districts without "MTL": <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm?MM=1>  
Districts with "MTL": [http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?\\_pageid=6897,67845597&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=6897,67845597&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

<b>LEGEND</b>	<b>AGE 5-19#</b> = Total number of individuals in age bracket	<b>CHIN#</b> = Number of Chinese minorities
	<b>AGE 5-19%</b> = Percentage of total population in age bracket	<b>CHIN%</b> = Percentage of Chinese minorities
	<b>LA#</b> = Number of Latin American minorities	<b>TOT POP</b> = Total Population
	<b>LA%</b> = Percentage of Latin American minorities	<b>VS POP</b> = Visible Minority Population
		<b>VS POP %</b> = Visible Minority Percentage

As is shown in table 2, the distribution does not merely refer to the population of municipalities but also the ethnic breakdown of the districts.

These data centered the foundations of our evidenced based arguments and recommendations and helped to advocate for a comprehensive report to assist LBPSB and its schools to utilize resources in a manner best suited to promote and encourage the inclusion of even the smallest population of ethno-cultural groupings.

In order to involve the general public in the process, media appearances (radio, television, print) were made by the Chair soliciting the participation of parents, both current and past; students of the LBPSB, current and past students; as well as both current and past employees. An open letter was also placed on the dedicated web space of the TF to that effect.<sup>44</sup> The outreach called for the public to acquaint the TF with issues – both negative and positive – which their children encountered while attending schools under the jurisdiction of Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB). In addition, they were asked to make recommendations to remedy negative situations they highlighted and/or provide support for positive observations. In addition, the Chair made several media appearances to advertise, and report on, the progress of the TF.

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/council-of-commissioners/task-force-on-equity-and-inclusion>

### 1.5.6 Meetings

To date there have been 20 formal bi-monthly meetings of the full TF held. During these meetings, although all issues were discussed collectively, members were expected to always present the perspectives of the group they represented (ex. parent, community, principal etc.) particularly in the creation of recommendations. In this manner, focus was maintained on the inclusive nature of the deliberations and assisted in the creation of a comprehensive report.<sup>45</sup>

The minutes of all formal meetings were made available to the public through the dedicated web space, already mentioned.

The TF in general, and the subgroup in particular, undertook to examine what is being done not only in LBPSB, but also elsewhere. This step, and the collection of letters from the community, made sure that data were being collected. Furthermore, having data allows individuals and groups to engage in discussions and make policy and procedural decisions based on verifiable information. Moreover, since everyone was working from the same set of data, it removed some elements of personal interpretations, feelings and biases. Of course, this did not mean that anecdotes would be discounted, but it did provide a foundation which could be employed to decode anecdotes and personal interpretations.

It was determined that all formal recommendations must be evidenced-based, and such evidence must be cited and appropriately referenced. Non-evidenced-based recommendations which, by general consensus, were deemed to be valid would be placed in an addendum.

It should be mentioned that although TF tried in several ways (social media outreach, presentations to adult centres, word of mouth, etc.) to encourage the participation of adult students, it was unable to gather specific substantial information regarding this population. Nonetheless, we did gather enough evidence-based information from school board professionals to include topics of importance to adult students in some of the chapters and recommendations.

## 1.6 Overview of subjects discussed in the report

### 1.6.1 Genders

Gender and sex are often used interchangeably and indeed, they are complementary.<sup>46</sup> However, their interpretation and significance demand different emphases. For clarification, we subscribe to the definitions of sex and gender as stated by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR). Namely: “**Sex** refers to a set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy” and is usually viewed as a binary

<sup>45</sup> Participants brought the same sensitivity to the sub-group to which they were assigned.

<sup>46</sup> University of Minnesota. M Libraries . “Understanding Sex and Gender”. Chapter 11, section 11.1.  
<https://open.lib.umn.edu/sociology/chapter/11-1-understanding-sex-and-gender/>

choice between male and female. Conversely, “**Gender** refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society”.<sup>47</sup>

The above definition allows us to focus on the social and environmental aspects of genders and their intersectionalities with other variables which affect the lives of individuals. This is very important for the well-being of children, especially those who are in the process of questioning their rights associated with genders. This would include how gender is defined, as well as its associated stereotypes. For example, referring to how women are portrayed and referenced in the on-line world of social media, Felmlee, Rodis and Zhang (2020)<sup>48</sup> state that in a review of tweets, they identified 2.9 million tweets in one week (representing 419,000 slurs per day) denigrating women through gendered and sexist language.<sup>49</sup> As pointed out by these investigators, such tweets are meant to condone a strategy which “aim to promote traditional, cultural beliefs about femininity, such as beauty ideals, and they shame victims by accusing them of falling short of these standards.” (p.16). These findings support the research conclusions of Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin and Frame (2005)<sup>50</sup> that girls and boys are exposed to traditional and stereotypical concepts of males and females. Thus, even though both sexes professed their belief in equality, they were of the opinion that they would all experience stereotypical attitudes once entering the workplace. Importantly, in spite of their understanding of what may await them in the workplace, boys and girls continue to display gender typical behaviours. The investigators also point out that the large range of possibilities available to today’s youth may be obscuring the prevalence of stereotypical attitudes. Interestingly, these researchers state that their findings demonstrate that teachers view girls as less confident and more anxious than boys, and boys are more prone to attention-seeking misbehaviour. It is important to underscore that these views often lead to the labelling of children (boys as attention-seeking bullies and girls as meek and lacking in confidence) and that such labelling often has a pervasive and long-lasting effect which influences teacher perceptions and expectations.<sup>51</sup>

The above draws attention to the necessity of awareness of the need to ascertain that gender is not ignored when engaging in conversations and developing strategies to address EDI. We must never forget, as Witt (2000) has shown, that children and youth are heavily influenced by their environment which includes parents, peers, home and school.<sup>52</sup> It is, of course, important to recall that young children will not deal with the issues in the same manner as adolescents. Nor will adolescents, for the most part, be faced with the same concerns as adults.

<sup>47</sup> Government of Canada. Canadian Institutes of Health. “What is gender? What is sex?”. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/48642.html>

<sup>48</sup> Felmlee, Rodis & Zhang (2020). Sexist Slurs: Reinforcing Feminine Stereotypes Online. *Sex Roles* 83: pp.16-28  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01095-z>

<sup>49</sup> e.g. “bitch”, “cunt”, “slut”, or “whore” *ibid*

<sup>50</sup> Tinklin, T., Croxford, L., Ducklin, A., & Frame, B. (2005) Gender and attitudes to work and family roles: the views of young people at the millennium, *Gender and Education*, 17(2). pp. 129-42, DOI: 10.1080/0954025042000301429

<sup>51</sup> Glass, C.S. (2014). Perception of Misbehavior: Understanding the Process of Labeling and the Role of Cultural Capital in the Disciplinary Process. *Urban Rev.* 46. pp. 372-394. DOI: 10.1007/s11256-013-0268-z

<sup>52</sup> Witt, S. D. (2000). The Influence of Peers on Children's Socialization to Gender Roles. *Early Child Development and Care*, 162(1). pp. 1-7, DOI: 10.1080/0300443001620101

Notwithstanding what has been stated above, gender is no longer a binary variable divided into dichotomous states of male and female. Indeed, gender has evolved to encompass the many ways in which individuals, regardless of age, describe and perceive themselves and how that perception leads them to act and to interact with others - including the pronouns they use to identify themselves and how they require others to treat them.

Chapter two, will address the concept of gender as a “hierarchical” social construct which on its own, or coupled with other human characteristics often produces intersected inequalities. The authors make a point of recognizing the work already done by LBPSB but states that there is a need to better educate students and staff about gender identities so that the LBPSB environment can be more inclusive, safe and welcoming to all individuals.

### **1.6.2 Sexualities**

One of the seminal intersections with gender is that of sexuality and one which must also be included in EDI strategic plans, policies and procedures.

The physical and emotional aspects of sexuality are complex and ones which present many challenges for adolescents. Sexuality and identity are closely aligned. For example, Travis, Meginnis and Badari (2000)<sup>53</sup> state that “narrow” definitions of beauty have not only been used to define women’s sexuality, but to exercise many forms of control over female bodies. Given the societal influences to which children and youth are exposed, it is to be expected that many of them will internalize both the positive and negative messages they receive - many of them from the schools they attend. As Borrero, Yeh, Cruz and Suda (2012)<sup>54</sup> stated, school is one of the primary sites where students who are marginalized, regardless of the nature of such marginalization – sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity and so forth, are ‘othered’. SickKids in Toronto has produced a newsletter for parents – in French and English - which highlights what should be said to a child, from early childhood to early adulthood, concerning their sexuality. Of course, discussions of sexuality with children must be tempered by the developmental age of the child.

It is, therefore, being posited that at every stage of a student’s academic life (from kindergarten onward, including adult education), educators need to be vigilant concerning the effects of ‘othering’ including those effects and affects which touch upon students’ understanding of their sexuality.

Regardless of developmental period, SickKids has made it clear that from a young age, children need to be taught “the basic social conventions of privacy, nudity and respect for others in relationships”.<sup>55</sup> (p.1)

<sup>53</sup> Travis, C. B., Meginnis, K. L., & Bardari, K.M. (2000). Beauty, sexuality, and identity: The social control of women. In *Sexuality, society, and feminism*. C. B. Travis & J. W. White (Eds.) pp. 237-272. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, viii, 432 pp.

<sup>54</sup> Yeh, C. J., Borrero, N., Cruz, I., & Suda, J. (2012). School as a Context for "Othering" Youth and Promoting Cultural Assets. *Teachers College Record*. 114. pp. 1-37.

<sup>55</sup> SickKids: AboutKidsHealth (2019). <https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=716&language=English>



Chapter three will address this issue and will provide the reader with a discourse on issues pertaining to the equity, diversity and inclusivity of students with diverse sexualities and sexual identities, including, but not limited to, LGBTQIA2S+. The manner in which students' sexualities intersect with other identification variables will also be highlighted as well as existing school services designed to assist students in this area. The role played by educational institutions in defining how they can contribute to ensuring an anti-oppressive experience at school will also be discussed.

### **1.6.3 Abilities**

An important issue is the many challenges faced by students with specific abilities – both mental and physical – which have been used to 'other' them not only in society, but in the school setting. Teachers have an important role in modeling appropriate behaviours and language when speaking about, or interacting with, this segment of the student population. Cimpian (2010)<sup>56</sup> highlights the necessity of employing correct non-generic language. For example, he makes the point that generic language views everyone in a category as the same (for instance a description of a girl). In other words, generic language does not allow for exceptions to the definition – that is to say, a girl is a girl is a girl and the attributes are stable. As Cimpian states, parents also speak to children using generic language. On the other hand, non-generic language provides for particularities and individualism while removing the expectation and fear of performing poorly because of membership in a specific group. Thus, one can speak of a particular student's abilities without restraining and constraining them to preconceived notions of what it means to be, for example, good at math. As Cimpian has shown, non-generic language is freeing for students and also motivational, as the individual's specific needs and goals outweigh the generic expectations society places on groups.

In chapter four the Abilities subgroup explores issues pertaining to advocacy, policies, neurodiversity, physical disabilities, mental health issues, classroom adaptation, teacher training, and the well-being of adults. Their results and recommendations are proffered in order to promote and sustain an equitable and inclusive environment for stakeholders, while taking into account the varied needs of this rich and diverse community.

### **1.6.4 Race and ethnicities**

Although Campian<sup>57</sup> focused his research on the use of generic and non-generic language on students with specific abilities, his findings can also be applied to those of identifiable race and ethnicities; and religions. For example, it has long been recognized that *race* has no biological basis and was created as a way for the dominant group to subjugate others.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, as far as generic language is concerned, one must ask what does it mean to be labelled by racial categories. How are they to be understood and interpreted? In fact, why retain them?

<sup>56</sup> Cimpian, A. (2010). The Impact of Generic Language About Ability on Children's Achievement Motivation. *Developmental Psychology*. 46 (5). pp. 1333-1340.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid*

<sup>58</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre. <http://www.aclrc.com/race>

*Racism*, however, is very real. As stated by Grosfoguel (2011)<sup>59</sup>, Racism is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human (sic) that have been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world system (sic)” (p.10). The consequences of racism and its effects can be quite dire and destructive up to and including poor physical and mental health<sup>60•61•62</sup>.

Although *Ethnicity* and *Race* are often conflated, an argument could be made that while race is frequently used to identify how people are different, ethnicity often refers to what brings people together and is shared. Thus, two Canadians, regardless of ‘race’ may share more in common that is recognized or admitted by viewing one as black and other white. As with the rest of society, schools must be careful not to assume that racism is only based on dichotomous categories of black and white. This would extend to developing a knowledge of the many cultures represented in the schools, including behaviours and utterances which bring about a sense of inclusion, as well as those which cause pain.

Chapter five focuses on the above issues and highlights six main themes: Anti-racism policy development; standardizing the implementation of the policy while taking into consideration the different social contexts of schools and institutions; mandatory documentation and submission of all cases related to racism; mandatory anti-racism training and professional development; implementation of a restorative justice processes; inclusion of community members in developing and delivering ethno-cultural celebrations.

### 1.6.5 Religions

In undertaking the subject of religion, we were very careful not to enter into the area of governmental curriculum jurisdiction, nor did we engage with the issues of secularity and religiosity. Therefore, as with other areas covered in this report, we focused on students’ sense of inclusion and the influence such inclusion has on an individual’s self-worth and self-esteem. Dupper, Forrest-Bank and Lowry-Carusillo (2015)<sup>63</sup> reports on a study in which students in grades 6-12 recounted incidents in which they were bullied, victimized and subjected to micro-aggressions due to their religious affiliations. Participants also reported that, in some incidents, teachers were also guilty of perpetrating these behaviours. Although this finding is disturbing, it is not surprising as teachers are subject to the same weaknesses and learnings as all of the rest of society.

<sup>59</sup> Grosfoguel, R. (2011). What is Racism? *Journal of World-Systems Research*. 22 (1). DOI: 10.5195/jwsr.2016.609

<sup>60</sup> Medical News Today. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/effects-of-racism>

<sup>61</sup> Harvard Health Publishing “How racism harms children”. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-racism-harms-children-2019091417788>

<sup>62</sup> Trent, M., Dooley, D.G., & Dougé, J. (2019). The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health. *Pediatrics*. 144 (2) e20191765. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1765>

<sup>63</sup> Dupper, D.R., Forrest-Bank, S., & Lowry-Carusillo, A. (2015). Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public School Settings: Findings from Focus Groups Involving Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Unitarian Universalist Youths. *Children & Schools*. 37 (1). pp. 37-45.

There are obviously moral and ethical concerns associated with violating students' human rights based on their religious beliefs, and those need to be addressed. In addition, making students feel ashamed and uncomfortable about an important part of their identity robs them of one of the major protective resources available to them to surmount the very victimization to which they are being subjected. For example, Schaefer et al.,<sup>64</sup> interviewed college students who had been subjected to physical and/or emotional trauma and how they had coped with such incidents. Their results showed that among the protective factors which provided resilience and post-traumatic growth, was positive religious coping which, according to the authors, is not about "broadband" religiosity but about such life skills as seeking guidance, asking for help and learning forgiveness. Given the results of these studies, it is not surprising that both sets of these researchers have suggested that strategies should be put in place to boost all protective factors, including religious tolerance, which will assist children in developing the resilience necessary to become healthy adults. As the researchers suggest, students who are othered in their formative years go on to have issues when it comes to self-esteem and self-worth, as well as how they see the world and their place in it.

In Chapter six, in addition to Atheist/Agnostic and Indigenous Spirituality, topics pertaining to six of the main world religions - Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu - will be highlighted. The focus will be on documented challenges faced by individuals of these faith groups, as well as proposed strategies aimed at assisting LBPSB to support these students.

It is hoped that this report will assist educators, administrators, and support staff in having a fuller understanding of the issues faced by students of LBPSB from kindergarten and into adult education. We also hope that the recommendations contained within these pages will benefit the implementation of strategies to make the schools of LBPSB more emotionally safe and healthy sites for everybody.

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<sup>64</sup> Schaefer et al ., (2018). A concurrent examination of protective factors associated with resilience and post traumatic growth following childhood victimization. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 85 pp. 17-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.08.019>

# Chapter 2 • Genders



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## 2.0 Introduction

The Government of Canada defines “gender” as “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people.”<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) asserts that “gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities.”<sup>66</sup>

In the Lester B. Pearson School Board’s Strategic Plan<sup>67</sup> (LBPSB), one can find their vision statement which states the following:

We, the members of the Lester B. Pearson School Board community comprising students, parents, teachers, professionals, support staff, administrators and commissioners, value:

- A respect for self, for each other, for our diversity and for our environment;
- Striving for excellence by maximizing the potential of each individual and by promoting a commitment to lifelong learning;
- The fostering of responsible citizenship, cooperation and a strong sense of community;
- The importance of a caring, nurturing and safe environment that is responsive to the needs of all;
- An atmosphere of openness, honesty, integrity and accountability.

Additionally, in section 2.1 of the LBPSB Intercultural Policy it states that:

*The Lester B. Pearson School Board affirms and promotes the dignity, equality and fundamental worth of all human beings regardless of age, capabilities, ethnic origin, gender or gender identity, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or education background.*<sup>68</sup>

In order to facilitate the LBPSB with staying true to their values and with the amelioration of practices which promote equity and inclusivity for all students and staff, regardless of the gender that they identify with, the TF Genders Subgroup set out to determine if the social construct of gender has produced any inequalities within the LBPSB community. The previously-mentioned exercise required the genders subgroup to “evaluate the strengths and

<sup>65</sup> <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/48642.html>

<sup>66</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1)

<sup>67</sup> [http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Documents/Strategic\\_Plan\\_2015\\_2020.pdf](http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Documents/Strategic_Plan_2015_2020.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> [https://boardsite.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Council/docs/policies/Intercultural\\_Policy\\_Sep.21\\_2020\\_ADOPTED.pdf](https://boardsite.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Council/docs/policies/Intercultural_Policy_Sep.21_2020_ADOPTED.pdf)

weaknesses of existing policies and procedures pertaining to addressing and eliminating all forms of systemic racism and discrimination.”<sup>69</sup> Additionally, if any discriminations and/or inequalities had been discovered, the genders subgroup was tasked with producing actionable recommendations that may facilitate the abolition of these issues. It is important to note that throughout this investigation there was a major focus on the challenges faced by transgender adolescents as they “are an underserved and poorly researched population.”<sup>70</sup> The work of our group proceeded as follows...First we took a look at the issues that were initially brought up by families within the LBPSB community; these issues were mostly brought to our attention by letters to the TF from families within the LBPSB community.<sup>71</sup> While only two of the letters sent to the Task Force were directly discussing issues related to gender, these letters were rich with enlightening information as they discussed specific difficulties that their transgender children faced within LBPSB schools. Addressing the concerns of these families was a priority. We felt strongly about advocating for those who feel they have been unheard and/or silenced. While we were looking into the gender-related concerns of these families, other issues became apparent, and recommendations to remedy these issues are being made. In order to collect more feedback concerning gender-related issues in Montreal schools, social media was utilized to ask parents to describe any gender-related experiences of their children; the feedback was taken into consideration when making further recommendations. This chapter will discuss the major themes that were uncovered during our research, discuss the recommendations for each issue, and finally, conclude with a discussion about issues that arise because the social construct of gender is important to the entire LBPSB community, regardless of gender.

## 2.1 Optimal learning environments

As a school board the overarching goal of the LBPSB is to “care about students and the future of education.”<sup>72</sup> It goes without saying that it is in their best-interest to create and foster optimal learning environments where students feel cared for. The questions that arise from the previous statements are, what is considered an optimal learning environment and what kind of environment allows a child to learn? Research shows that an environment in which students feel safe<sup>73</sup>, supported, and motivated<sup>74-75</sup>, sets a student up for academic success. Additionally, studies have shown that more specifically, it is “intrinsic motivation” which keeps students engaged, and three conditions that foster “intrinsic motivation” are:

- Autonomy: The need to be the causal agent of one’s own life and act in harmony with one’s integrated self;
- Competence: Being effective in dealing with the environment in which a person finds oneself;
- Relatedness: The desire to interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others; a connection to something larger than oneself.<sup>76</sup> ( p.25)

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/council-of-commissioners/task-force-on-equity-and-inclusion>

<sup>70</sup> Olson, J., Forbes, C., & Belzer, M. (2011). Management of the transgender adolescent. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 165(2), 171-6. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpediatrics.2010.275>

<sup>71</sup> The letters were sent in November 2020 and January 2021.

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.cdnsba.org/why-do-school-boards-matter#>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/social-emotional-needs-entwined-with-students-learning-security/2013/01>

<sup>74</sup> Fretz, J. R. (2015). Creating optimal learning environments through invitational education: an alternative to control oriented school reform. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice*, 21, 23-30.

<sup>75</sup> Guay, F., Ratelle, C. F., & Chana, J. (2008). Optimal learning in optimal contexts: the role of self-determination in education. *Canadian Psychology*, 49(3), 233-240. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012758>

<sup>76</sup> Fretz, J. R. (2015). Creating optimal learning environments through invitational education: an alternative to control oriented school reform. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice*, 21, 23-30. (p. 25)



Optimal learning environments include all students. Educators, in this case the LBPSB, must consider how gender rigid and specifically gender binary paradigms impact the learning environments in schools. Most importantly, they must consider their impact on those students whose reality does not fall within those rigid paradigms.

### **2.1.1 Addressing gender stereotypes is important for the entire LBPSB community**

Crippling gender binary systems within the LBPSB is not only important to one group of marginalized individuals, it is important to the entire LBPSB community, regardless of their gender. In the spring of 2021, one of the Task Force members took to social media, and asked parents from the Montreal area: “What are some GENDER-related issues that your children have faced in school?”; the response was overwhelming (there were over 130 comments under this social media post). Many of the comments expressed that gender-stereotypes are continuously being perpetuated at school, and some comments even went as far as to describe that they are tired of their children being victimized because of gender-stereotypes. While there were many comments, we could see four major recurring themes:

1. Gender-stereotypes which dictate what is “appropriate” for boys and girls (i.e. colors, hair length, toys, sports teams, wearing nail polish etc.);
2. Gender-stereotypes which produce a limiting and narrow understanding of masculinity;
3. Gender-stereotypes which produce double-standards;
4. Bullying linked to gender and sexuality.

Many parents were frustrated because their children were not free to participate in some of the things that they are interested in, simply because society has deemed these things inappropriate for their gender. One parent expressed frustration that school had “undone” the efforts that their family had made when it came to their desire to not raise their daughter within the confinement of a gender binary system:

*“We always raised our daughter without gendering her toys. She's now 7, in first grade, and now she genders everything and says “no, that's for boys”...”*

Another parent expressed frustration that their son likes colours that have been socially classified as “girly colours”:

*“My son loves the colors pink and purple, but he constantly tells me he doesn't want to wear t-shirts in those colors to school because people have told him (other students) that those are girl colors...”*

Then there was a parent who mentioned the following:

*“[name omitted] was asked to pick a gift and when she picked a Star Wars book over another type “girl” book, she was told she couldn't take it because it was a boy book: this saddened her.”*

And finally, this parent's subtle plea to allow their son to express his emotions was one that is all too familiar for many:

*“They need to stop telling boys to suck it up if they cry or boys don't cry or they are a wimp for crying or a loser for being sensitive.”*

While these parents shared the emotional damage that the gender-stereotypes have caused their children, studies contend that the negative effects of gender-stereotypes go beyond this. Gender-stereotypical practices ultimately affect students' learning experiences because "children are deterred from learning about activities deemed appropriate for the other gender"<sup>77</sup> and therefore this "prevents the development of broad skills and interests."<sup>78</sup>

The second recurring theme was the idea that society has a general, narrow, definition of what "masculinity" is, and males who steer away from the socially constructed idea of masculinity are often ridiculed by other males. Consider the following parental statements:

- *"My son was mocked for not liking sports, not wanting to play master like the other boys, and not playing hockey outside of school. He was also ridiculed for reading and being more studious, being told studying is for girls."*
- *"Boys would say that [name removed] is so gay<sup>79</sup> for liking pink...I told him that he should ignore what miserable little boys have to say about it: he still avoids pink at school though."*
- *"My son wanted to play on the same team as his best friend (who is a girl), and the other boys would laugh at him. "*

### 2.1.2 Toxic masculinity

"Toxic masculinity" has been defined as "the constellation of socially regressive [masculine] traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton<sup>80</sup> violence"<sup>81</sup>. Within each one of the parental comments mentioned above (which discuss the behaviour of boys who are minors), we see the presence of toxic masculinity. This demonstrates to us that toxic masculinity begins to manifest at a very young age. Research shows that "gender norms are stronger for boys and boys are therefore less willing (or believe themselves unable) to cross gender boundaries."<sup>82</sup> This may be the cause of early manifestation of toxic masculine behaviours. However, this is not an excuse for adults to let this behaviour be excused. When adults see young males exhibiting toxic behavior, that behavior must be called out and addressed immediately: no more saying "boys will be boys." Additionally, it has been suggested that "adolescent boys are often less likely to intervene when they witness bullying due to masculinity norms."<sup>83</sup> With this being said, if we want to ensure that our schools are safe-spaces, and reduce bullying as much as possible, we have to make allies out of our students. We must work to dismantle "masculinity norms" as they inhibit a lot of boys from being allies.

<sup>77</sup> Spinner, L., Tenenbaum, H. R., Cameron, L., & Wallinheimo, A.-S. (2021). A school-based intervention to reduce gender-stereotyping. *School Psychology International*, 014303432110099, 014303432110099–014303432110099. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01430343211009944>

<sup>78</sup> King, R. A., Scott, K. E., Renno, M. P., & Shutt, K. (2020). Counter Stereotyping can change children's thinking about boys' and girls' toy preferences. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2019.104753>

<sup>79</sup> Homophobic name-calling is often used as a bullying tool amongst males, and it is unacceptable. See Ingram et al., 2019.

<sup>80</sup> "A wanton action deliberately causes harm, damage, or waste without having any reason to." <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/wanton>

<sup>81</sup> Ingram, K. M., Davis, J. P., Espelage, D. L., Hatchel, T., Merrin, G. J., Valido, A., & Torgal, C. (2019). Longitudinal associations between features of toxic masculinity and bystander willingness to intervene in bullying among middle school boys. *Journal of School Psychology*, 77, 139-151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.10.007>

<sup>82</sup> Spinner, L., Tenenbaum, H. R., Cameron, L., & Wallinheimo, A.-S. (2021). A school-based intervention to reduce gender-stereotyping. *School Psychology International*, 014303432110099, 014303432110099–014303432110099. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01430343211009944>

<sup>83</sup> Ingram, K. M., Davis, J. P., Espelage, D. L., Hatchel, T., Merrin, G. J., Valido, A., & Torgal, C. (2019). Longitudinal associations between features of toxic masculinity and bystander willingness to intervene in bullying among middle school boys. *Journal of School Psychology*, 77, 139-151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.10.007>

While the previous theme discussed the need to address toxic masculinity, it is important for us to not allow gender-stereotypes to produce double-standards. Thus, if a female is exhibiting toxic behaviour, her behaviour must be called out immediately as well. In a fully-expressed comment by a parent, we see the evidence of a double-standard:

*“When my son was in grade 8 at his old school, a girl in his grade really liked him [but he wasn’t interested in her]. She pursued him for months, messaged him everywhere on his social media accounts, always sat next to him in class, and would wait for him at his locker. She wouldn’t take no for an answer. We addressed this with the school a number of times, because at that point we felt it was harassment, but nothing was ever done. Finally the jilted girl’s sadness turned to anger and she came to school with fake brass knuckles and she and her friends backed my son into a corner. My son is very tall—he was 6 ft tall by that age. He’s also an athlete. He could have taken her down in an instant, but he was scared to do anything because it would look like he had attacked a girl. Finally his friends stepped in and held her down until a lunch monitor showed up. We then went to the police, but we didn’t press charges, because it was clear to us that there was some kind of mental health component here and we just wanted the girl to get help. It was only after the police notified the school and gave them instructions to keep the girl away from my son that the issue was actually addressed. She was kept away from him after that. But why did it have to come to this? It didn’t fit stereotypical gender roles for a girl to be harassing a boy, so the school brushed it off...”*

This example highlights the necessity for schools to be aware of how they may be inadvertently perpetuating gender stereotypes.

From the discussion of the first three themes brought to our attention by Montreal parents on social media, we see that gender stereotypes are learned, and schools can play a significant role in perpetuating these toxic gender-stereotypes. However, as difficult as it may be, **if something is learned, it can be unlearned**. Our recommendations for this section involve the educators of the LBPSB constantly having important and informative dialogues with the students and community.

### 2.1.3 Recommendations

# Recommendations

1. Encourage LBPSB educators to help students identify and critically challenge stereotypes;
2. Encourage LBPSB educators to display and “normalize” counter stereotypes<sup>84</sup> (i.e. show men talking about their feelings and emotions, show males and females pursuing careers that their genders don’t “normally” pursue, normalize men wearing colours that society has deemed as “female” colours etc.);
3. Encourage LBPSB educators to help students to not only see the differences amongst the genders, but to see the similarities (i.e. “teach them that a range of emotions are experienced by women and men, boys and girls...”);<sup>85</sup>
4. Encourage the LBPSB community to address the idea that “heteronormativity is a harmful component of toxic masculinity”;<sup>86</sup>
5. Encourage the LBPSB community to challenge homophobic language.

<sup>84</sup> One frequently tested approach for reducing gender stereotyping is counter stereotyping. Counter Stereotyping interventions highlight specific examples of stereotype-inconsistent information.”

See: King, R. A., Scott, K. E., Renno, M. P., & Shutts, K. (2020). Counter Stereotyping can change children's thinking about boys' and girls' toy preferences. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2019.104753>

<sup>85</sup> Spinner, L., Tenenbaum, H. R., Cameron, L., & Wallinheimo, A.-S. (2021). A school-based intervention to reduce gender-stereotyping. *School Psychology International*, 014303432110099, 014303432110099–014303432110099. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01430343211009944>

<sup>86</sup> Ingram, K. M., Davis, J. P., Espelage, D. L., Hatchel, T., Merrin, G. J., Valido, A., & Torgal, C. (2019). Longitudinal associations between features of toxic masculinity and bystander willingness to intervene in bullying among middle school boys. *Journal of School Psychology*, 77, 139-151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.10.007>

## 2.2 How do we meet the needs of Transgender<sup>87</sup>, Nonbinary<sup>88</sup> & Gender Nonconforming<sup>89</sup> youths?

The impact of the gender-stereotypical environment described above is particularly crippling for transgender, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming youth. Consider the following excerpts from families speaking to the need for LBPSB to be aware of the challenges faced by transgender students specifically:

*“Over the past several years I’ve been lobbying for changes to the board’s policies with regards to bullying in order to specifically address gender-based harassment (such as homophobia, transphobia, and sexual harassment), in addition to incidents related to race, ability, religion, etc....In March 2018, both my daughter, who was then an LBPSB student, and my husband, spoke before the school board council to address these topics...Both my son and daughter ended up withdrawing from their schools at different times due to this harassment and the inability of the schools to change their environments to make safe spaces for students of all genders, sexualities, races, religions, and abilities.”*

Reading this suggests that the family withdrew their children from these schools because their children did not feel safe, and that the needs of their children were not being met. In another letter, one parent wrote:

*“My child came out as transgender during Secondary 2. The school we attended was extremely supportive and helpful during this situation. The issue that arose was the lack of a gender neutral bathroom. I had to meet with the admin for this request and then the admin had to consult with the LBPSB in order to put something in place. Meanwhile, my child had to start school with a temporary solution.*

*There was a bathroom offered that was used for the public who attended shows and it was close to the main office and away from students’ classes. This caused my child to have to travel far from their class just to use the washroom. It wasn’t placed like a regular washroom in the school. It was a temporary solution that still exists. My child now feels comfortable using the bathroom that aligns with their gender so they no longer use the gender neutral washroom. Many students still use it but it still feels like an afterthought.”*

<sup>87</sup> “Transgender people are people whose gender identity is different from the gender they were thought to be at birth. ‘Trans’ is often used as shorthand for transgender...A transgender woman lives as a woman today, but was thought to be male when she was born. A transgender man lives as a man today, but was thought to be female when he was born. Some transgender people identify as neither male nor female, or as a combination of male and female. There are a variety of terms that people who aren’t entirely male or entirely female use to describe their gender identity, like non-binary or genderqueer.” <https://transequality.org/issues/resources/frequently-asked-questions-about-transgender-people>

<sup>88</sup> “Most people – including most transgender people – are either male or female. But some people don’t neatly fit into the categories of ‘man’ or ‘woman,’ or ‘male’ or ‘female’... People whose gender is not male or female use many different terms to describe themselves, with non-binary being one of the most common. Other terms include genderqueer, agender, bigender, and more. None of these terms mean exactly the same thing – but all speak to an experience of gender that is not simply male or female.” <https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive>

<sup>89</sup> “‘Gender nonconforming’ is a term given to people who don’t conform with the gender norms that are expected of them. The term usually refers to gender expression or presentation (that is, how someone looks and dresses). It can also refer to behavior, preferences, and roles that don’t conform to gender norms.” <https://www.healthline.com/health/gender-nonconforming#:~:text=E2%80%99CGender%20nonconforming%E2%80%9D%20is%20a%20term,t%20conform%20to%20gender%20norms>



Each testimony made us aware that the needs of all students were not being met. Transgendered youth feel excluded and unimportant, or, “like an afterthought”, a phrase that particularly resonated with us. With this being said, the learning environments that these students occupied were not optimal for them.

Acknowledgement of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming students renders an inflexible binary system exclusive by definition. Dismantling that system is thus a call for equity.<sup>90</sup> These students are not asking for much. They are simply asking for the same freedoms, liberties and respect that their cisgender<sup>91</sup> peers are granted by default.

What can be done to meet the needs of these students, so that they too can have access to optimal learning environments, and learn to the best of their ability? The recommendations formulated based on the issues discussed in these letters will now be presented.

### 2.2.1 Recommendation

Respect students by acknowledging & seeing them for who they really are: address students with their preferred pronouns & by their chosen name and use gender neutral language.

How often is a cisgender individual constantly misgendered<sup>92</sup> and/or repeatedly called the incorrect name? Not quite often... if this were happening to a cisgender individual, most would find this peculiar, absurd, offensive, upsetting, etc. yet many transgender youth frequently “face disregard for their gender identity and expression,”<sup>93</sup> which is unjust. It is particularly important to realize that “transgender individuals are at higher risk of poor mental health in comparison to nontransgender individuals”<sup>94</sup> and amongst transgender youths there are “extremely high levels of suicidal ideation and behavior.”<sup>95</sup> However data suggests that “the use of gender-affirming language, specifically [chosen] name and pronouns, in more life contexts is associated with improved mental health outcomes;”<sup>96</sup> Russel et al. (2018) assert that:

*Because first names are often gender-specific, chosen name use is part of the social transition process to align one’s gender presentation with one’s gender identity. This gender social transition process, including changing first names, pronouns, hair, and clothing, is associated with better mental health among transgender youth.<sup>97</sup>(p.503)*

<sup>90</sup> It is important to note that “equity” and “equality” are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing... “Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.” <https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/>

<sup>91</sup> “Cisgender”: “of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth.” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cisgender>

<sup>92</sup> “Misgendering” is to “refer to (someone, especially a transgender person) using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.” <https://www.lexico.com/definition/misgender>

<sup>93</sup> Wernick, L. J., Kulick, A., & Chin, M. (2017). Gender identity disparities in bathroom safety and wellbeing among high school students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(5), 917-930. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0652-1>

<sup>94</sup> Russell, S. T., Pollitt, A. M., Li, G., & Grossman, A. H. (2018). Chosen name use is linked to reduced depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior among transgender youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 63(4), 503-505.

<sup>95</sup> Grossman, A. H., Park, J. Y., & Russell, S. T. (2016). Transgender youth and suicidal behaviors: applying the interpersonal psychological theory of suicide. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 20(4), 329-349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2016.1207581>

<sup>96</sup> Sequeira, G. M., Kidd, K., Coulter, R. W. S., Miller, E., Garofalo, R., & Ray, K. N. (2020). Affirming transgender youths’ names and pronouns in the electronic medical record. *Jama Pediatrics*, 174(5), 501-503. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.6071>

<sup>97</sup> Russell, S. T., Pollitt, A. M., Li, G., & Grossman, A. H. (2018). Chosen name use is linked to reduced depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior among transgender youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 63(4), 503-505.

As adults who want to ensure that our youths are as mentally healthy as they can be, we should definitely do everything that is within our power to help. That is to say, referring to youths by their preferred pronouns, and chosen name, even if their names have not been legally changed.<sup>98</sup> If indicating chosen name and preferred pronouns are a part of the registration process, teachers would receive this information on their class lists, and transgender students would no longer have to endure the fear and pain of being misgendered and/or referred to by an incorrect name. What's more, while these gender-affirming actions are a recommendation of the Task Force, it should be noted that the government is making similar strides to better serve transgender youths as well. In the explanatory notes of Bill 103, which is entitled "An Act to strengthen the fight against transphobia"<sup>99</sup> and improve the situation of transgender minors in particular" (which was adopted in June 2016) it states:

*This bill amends the Civil Code to provide that a minor child 14 years of age or over may act alone in applying for a change of name to the registrar of civil status and that, in such a case, the application will not be granted, except for a compelling reason, if both the minor child's parents, as legal tutors, or the tutor, if any, have not been notified of the application or if one of them objects to it...The Civil Code is also amended to allow a minor child to obtain from the registrar of civil status a change of designation of sex as it appears in the act of birth.<sup>100</sup>*

### 2.2.2 Recommendation

## Recommendation

LBPSB must clearly articulate the process by which a student may indicate their chosen name and gender and ensure that this choice is respected by all members of the school community.

<sup>98</sup> Sequeira, G. M., Kidd, K., Coulter, R. W. S., Miller, E., Garofalo, R., & Ray, K. N. (2020). Affirming transgender youths' names and pronouns in the electronic medical record. *Jama Pediatrics*, 174(5), 501–503. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.6071>

<sup>99</sup> Transphobia: "an irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender people." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transphobia>

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-103-41-1.html?appellant=MC>

## 2.3 Inconsistencies in the gender language that is used in LBPSB By-Laws

It is not only important for youth to feel included, respected and cared for by being referred to by their chosen name and correct pronouns, it is important for youth to see gender-inclusive language<sup>101</sup> used within their environments (both physical and digital environments). Upon examining policies and other content on the LBPSB website, we noticed some inconsistencies in the gender language that is used. In the *By-Law 9 – A Complaint Examination Procedure* (updated in October 2019), in a footnote it states:

*“Note that the **masculine gender**, when used in this document, refers to any person without discrimination;”*

which is not gender-neutral language.<sup>102</sup> However, in another document that was updated in June 29, 2020, the footnote reads:

*“In this document, the use of **gender-neutral** plural or collective form has been used whenever possible in the context. The addenda are for reference and administrative purposes; it is subject to updates and modifications without consultation.”*

The latter excerpt demonstrates that the LBPSB is aware of the need to use gender-inclusive language, and is making strides to do so. Unfortunately, in a form entitled “Registration Form For Parents” (dated November 19, 2020), it only exhibits a binary<sup>103</sup> option for gender. Additionally, we came across a document which outlined the dress-code and uniform rules for a LBPSB secondary school<sup>104</sup>, and often there is reference to gender binary terms, which does not consider transgender, nonbinary nor nonconforming students.

Based upon these observations, we have made the following recommendations:

### 2.3.1 Recommendations

*Recommendations*

1. All documents and website content be examined to ensure that gender neutral and inclusive language is being used board-wide;
2. Teachers should also be using gender neutral language within their classrooms. This would also mean that prior to presenting content to their classes, they should ensure that there is use of gender-neutral language in the contents of the lesson plan. The consistent use of gender neutral and inclusive language would reinforce some of the LBPSB’s values which state that they are comprehensive, and that they respect and embrace diversity.

<sup>101</sup> Interesting article which discusses “How to Use Gender-Neutral Words”: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/how-to-use-gender-neutral-words>

<sup>102</sup> Examples of “gender neutral language”: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender-inclusive-language/>

<sup>103</sup> “Gender Binary” is “a classification system consisting of two genders, male and female.” <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/gender-binary>

<sup>104</sup> [https://boardsite.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/OpenHouse2020/Beurling/Welcome\\_to\\_Beurling\\_Academy.pdf](https://boardsite.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/OpenHouse2020/Beurling/Welcome_to_Beurling_Academy.pdf)

## 2.4 Make the environment inclusive & safe

### 2.4.1 Increase representation in presented content: Representation Matters

There are often outcries from marginalized<sup>105</sup> groups for the government to change the curriculum in order for it to be more diverse and inclusive.<sup>106</sup> While we are well-aware that changing the curriculum in order to increase representation amongst marginalized groups, such as LGBTQIA2s+<sup>107</sup>, is necessary, we know that this is not something that will happen overnight. In the meantime, we are recommending that teachers adapt their pedagogical approaches and find creative ways to incorporate LGBTQIA2s+ topics; for example teachers can choose to have students “study biographies of LGBTQIA2s+ scientists, discuss biological theories of sexual orientation and gender identity, construct math word problems so as not to assume heterosexual context, etc.”.<sup>108</sup> Increasing LGBTQIA2s+ representation in course content is important because not only does it make these students feel included; it normalizes their sexual and gender identities; and will reduce negative behaviours such as homophobia<sup>109</sup> and transphobia.<sup>110</sup> This adjustments will make classrooms feel safer for LGBTQIA2s+ individuals. Moreover, diverse positive representation matters because what young people see, positively or negatively, shapes their expectations for themselves and each other. In other words, we must all do our part to help students view themselves, and their peers, as strong, creative, capable, happy, and connected.<sup>111</sup>

### 2.4.2 Recommendation

Teachers should adapt their pedagogical approaches and find creative ways to incorporate LGBTQIA2s+ topics, in order to increase LGBTQIA2s+ representation and make class content more inclusive.

<sup>105</sup> Marginalize: “to treat someone or something as if they are not important” <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/marginalize>

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anti-racism-education-in-canada>

<sup>107</sup> Pride 101: LGBTQIA2S+ Terminology - Cumming School of ... <https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/sites/files/teams>

<sup>108</sup> Macgillivray, I. K., & Jennings, T. (2008). A content analysis exploring lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender topics in foundations of education textbooks. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(2), 170-188.

<sup>109</sup> Homophobia, culturally produced fear of or prejudice against homosexuals that sometimes manifests itself in legal restrictions or, in extreme cases, bullying or even violence against homosexuals.” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/homophobia>

<sup>110</sup> This idea will be further-developed in a later section.

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/why-representation-matters-laura-thomas>

## 2.5 Educate the community about the Transgender, Nonbinary & Gender Nonconforming community

“Prejudice reduction refers to a decrease in (most often) negative attitudes or evaluations that individuals hold in relation to other people.”<sup>112</sup> Additionally, studies have shown that prejudice reduction, in regards to transgender individuals, and a reduction in transphobia can be achieved by engaging in “informative discussions about transgender people.”<sup>113•114</sup> The previous-mentioned information coupled with the concerns expressed by parents in the letters to the TF lead to recommend the following:

### 2.5.1 Recommendation

The LBPSB should gather information about the LGBTQIA2s+ community, and then disseminate this information to the entire LBPSB community.

LBPSB has done a lot of work in this area and has amassed a great deal of information on gender and sexuality. However, families expressed the need for greater development in this area as the information is not easily accessible to the community. Therefore, we recommend the following:

### 2.5.2 Recommendations

1. LBPSB should do more “footwork” to gather information about the LGBTQIA2s+ community, and then must disseminate this information to the entire LBPSB community;
2. LBPSB must make the information that they gather about the LGBTQIA2s+ community easily accessible to the community;
3. LBPSB should be more transparent and accountable when implementing changes to address the needs of their community;
4. Create a ninth tab on the current LBPSB web page, entitled “Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Work” this area will house all of the EDI work done by the board, and will be kept up-to-date.

<sup>112</sup> <http://psychology.iresearchnet.com/social-psychology/prejudice/prejudice-reduction/>

<sup>113</sup> Broockman, D., & Kalla, J. (2016). Durably reducing transphobia: a field experiment on door-to-door canvassing. *Science* (New York, N.y.), 352(6282), 220-4. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aad9713>

<sup>114</sup> Flores, A. R., Haider-Markel, D. P., Lewis, D. C., Miller, P. R., Tadlock, B. L., & Taylor, J. K. (2018). Transgender prejudice reduction and opinions on transgender rights: results from a mediation analysis on experimental data. *Research & Politics*, 5(1), 205316801876494–205316801876494. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168018764945>



***“I will NOT refer to you with female pronouns”: Duval teacher snubs transgender student's request”***<sup>115</sup> read the headline of a news article. ***“A teacher says he was fired for refusing to use male pronouns for a transgender student”***<sup>116</sup> read the headline of another article outlining an incident where a student transitioned to male and asked his teacher to use the “he, him, his” pronouns, but the teacher refused to address him with his preferred pronouns because the teacher said that “lying was against his religion.” This same article mentions that the student once said:

*“Mr. Vlaming, you may have your religion...but you need to respect who I am!”*

These articles reflect a painful reality: as much as teachers are often part of the solution to the problems of marginalized students, sometimes they are a part of the problem. Research shows that staff must be properly trained in order to ensure safety and support for students<sup>117</sup> (p.561) but unfortunately little or no formal education on subjects related to gender diversity is provided to educators.<sup>118</sup> (p.449) Based on this information, we recommend the following:

### 2.5.3 Recommendations

## Recommendations

1. Schedule regular workshops on gender and sexual identity;
2. Recommending that the school board work towards building a library of professional development videos, so that teachers can view the informative videos on their own time;
3. Develop and promote a specific training package for teachers receiving a transgender in their classroom or for teachers working with transitioning students.

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/news/education/i-will-not-refer-to-you-with-female-pronouns-duval-teacher-snubs-transgender-students-request/77-7567acd6-1b5c-45eb-a1fd-ba1fc8d89691>

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/02/us/virginia-teacher-says-wrongfully-fired-student-wrong-pronouns-trnd/index.html>

<sup>117</sup> Demissie, Z., Rasberry, C. N., Steiner, R. J., Brener, N., & McManus, T. (2018). Trends in secondary schools' practices to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students, 2008-2014. *American Journal of Public Health*, 108(4), 557-564. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304296> (p.561)

<sup>118</sup> Meyer, E. J., & Leonardi, B. (2018). Teachers' professional learning to affirm transgender, non-binary, and gender-creative youth: experiences and recommendations from the field. *Sex Education*, 18(4), 449-463. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2017.1411254> (p. 449)

## 2.6 Access to the proper spaces

For many cisgender students, the bathroom is a place of refuge. After a stressful test, a student may have knots in their stomach, and asks, “*May I go to the bathroom please?*” Two friends may strategically ask to go to the bathroom in order to escape the stress and pressures of the classroom, and exchange pleasantries. The same may not hold true for transgender youths who frequent a school that only has gender binary washrooms. For them, going to the bathroom is more intimidating because they are unable to be themselves.<sup>119</sup>

The exclusive provision of gender binary bathrooms is a subtle, yet powerful, form of gender policing which regularly forces non-binary students into behaving in ways acceptable to society. Facing that binary choice, most opt to use a bathroom that will allow them to “fly under the radar”, as opposed to using a bathroom that is aligned with their identity. That lack of options is damaging to the development of an adolescent’s authentic identity and self-esteem.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, studies show that transgender and nonconforming youths were more likely to miss school “due to concerns for their safety,”<sup>121</sup> (p.14) which causes them to underperform academically when compared to their cisgender counterparts. Not only does not having access to gender-neutral bathrooms cause psychological stress, there are also adverse physiological health effects. Many transgender and nonbinary youths avoid using the bathrooms at school which often results in “dehydration and urinary tract or bladder infections.”<sup>122</sup> (p.918) From this discourse, we see that not having gender-neutral bathrooms makes school a hostile terrain for transgender and nonconforming youths, which has many negative repercussions, therefore we recommend the following;

### 2.6.1 Recommendations

## Recommendations

1. LBPSB does a thorough investigation on how many of their schools (elementary, secondary and the adult education centres) have gender-neutral bathrooms and changing rooms, how many facilities they have, and their locations (are they in inconvenient locations?)<sup>123</sup>. The board should ensure that every one of their Adult Centers has more than one gender-neutral, and they should be placed in areas that are not too far from the students’ classrooms;
2. A general washroom sign is posted on all gender neutral washrooms in both primary and secondary locations clearly differencing them from the gender specific washrooms.

<sup>119</sup> Davies, A. W. J., Vipond, E., & King, A. (2017). Gender binary washrooms as a means of gender policing in schools: a Canadian perspective. *Gender and Education*, 1-20, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1354124> (page 870)

<sup>120</sup> Davies, A. W. J., Vipond, E., & King, A. (2017). Gender binary washrooms as a means of gender policing in schools: a Canadian perspective. *Gender and Education*, 1-20, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1354124>

<sup>121</sup> Klemmer, C. L., Rusow, J., Goldbach, J., Kattari, S. K., & Rice, E. (2019). Socially assigned gender nonconformity and school violence experience among transgender and cisgender adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, (201904). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519844781> (Page 14)

<sup>122</sup> Wernick, L. J., Kulick, A., & Chin, M. (2017). Gender identity disparities in bathroom safety and wellbeing among high school students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(5), 917-930. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0652-1> (page 918)

<sup>123</sup> The location is important as some parents have expressed that some schools only have one gender neutral bathroom, and it is often not in close-proximity to their children’s classrooms, which causes students to miss out on class instruction time.

Our team did an informal survey on the gender neutral facilities in the LBPSB secondary schools; while our survey gave us a general idea about the situation, there is still a lot of information missing such as whether each school has only one gender neutral bathroom; and for those who have them, what is their location. Additionally, the survey only gave a snapshot of the gender neutral facilities within the secondary schools as no information was available in the elementary schools or the adult education centres.

Evidence suggests that LGBTQIA2s+ adolescents suffer greater victimization than their peers,<sup>124</sup> (p.1277) and that such victimization often leads to high rates of depression and other forms of self-harm, including suicidal ideation.<sup>125</sup> Importantly, “gay-straight alliances (GSAs) are school-based organizations for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQIA2s+?) youth and their allies,”<sup>126</sup> and studies have shown that groups of this sort and other safe spaces for the LGBTQIA2s+ community are central to reducing suicidal thoughts and drug abuse as well as, being instrumental in improving academic performance<sup>127</sup> (p.557) Given the evidence that having safe spaces like GSAs<sup>128</sup> are beneficial to LGBTQIA2s+ youths, LBPSB should do a similar survey as outlined above (re: gender neutral bathrooms), to ensure that every school has a LGBTQIA2s+ club space.

### 2.6.2 Recommendations

## Recommendations

1. Ensure that secondary and Adult Centers have more than one gender-neutral bathroom, and that these bathrooms are located in an ideal location for the transgender and nonconforming students;
2. Ensure that primary schools have at least one gender-neutral bathroom, and that these bathrooms are located in an ideal location for the transgender and nonconforming students;
3. Ensure that schools have gender-neutral changing rooms;
4. Ensure that each school has a LGBTQIA2s+ club space.

In summary, in this section we briefly discussed aspects of what could be called, ‘an optimal learning environment’. We also addressed what should be done in order to meet the needs of transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students so that they can attend school in ‘optimal learning environments’ and reach their academic potentials. Evidence-based recommendations were made. We are, therefore, confident that implementing them will improve the learning environment of the LGBTQIA2s+ community.

<sup>124</sup> Marx, R. A., & Kettrey, H. H. (2016). Gay-straight alliances are associated with lower levels of school-based victimization of lgbtq youth: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence : A Multidisciplinary Research Publication*, 45(7), 1269–1282. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0501-7> (p. 1277)

<sup>125</sup> Day, J. K., Perez-Brumer, A., & Russell, S. T. (2018). Safe schools? transgender youth's school experiences and perceptions of school climate. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(8), 1731–1742. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-018-0866-x>

<sup>126</sup> Marx, R. A., & Kettrey, H. H. (2016). Gay-straight alliances are associated with lower levels of school-based victimization of lgbtq youth: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence : A Multidisciplinary Research Publication*, 45(7), 1269–1282. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0501-7>

<sup>127</sup> Demissie, Z., Rasberry, C. N., Steiner, R. J., Brener, N., & McManus, T. (2018). Trends in secondary schools' practices to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students, 2008–2014. *American Journal of Public Health*, 108(4), 557–564. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304296> (p. 557)

<sup>128</sup> <https://gsanetwork.org/what-is-a-gsa/>

## 2.7 Addressing disciplinary and policy double-standards and biases in school settings

While what we are about to discuss was not sparked by the social media responses, we feel that it is important to address these other gender-related issues at this point as they relate to double-standards that we have seen within the LBPSB community. Firstly, within the school system we see another double-standard when we compare disciplinary measures taken with Black and White students: we see that Black students, especially Black male students, are disciplined more harshly than their White counterparts.<sup>129</sup>

On more than one occasion, group members have spoken to mothers of Black sons who attend LBPSB schools (which have a predominantly white student body), and they all shared a similar narrative.

*They felt as though their sons were being picked on and bullied by some of the teachers and administrators in their schools. One boy told his mother that his teacher just doesn't like him because he's Black, and when asked why he felt this way, he stated that he knows this because there are white students doing "worse" things, but they aren't punished as severely as he has been: they get spoken to by the teacher, whereas he is always sent down to the principal's office. This same child was suspended numerous times for talking back to a specific teacher, who the mother says: "had it out for him"; on one occasion in particular, the young man was suspended because the teacher said that she felt "threatened" by him, however, the young man said that he didn't do anything but ask why she was sending him down to the office.*

While on suspension, the mother recalls that they asked if they could have some work for him to do while he was at home on suspension, and the administration told him that he will be:

*"lucky if he gets work from his teachers."*

No child should be denied access to school work, even if they have been suspended. When the mother had had enough of this "bullying" she stated that she contacted

*"the head of the school board and even left a message for him to call her back, but he never did."*

The mother saw her son losing motivation to go to school. In fear of her son being deprived of a good education, she withdrew her child, and put him in another school where there were more Black students. There, the teachers and administration seemed to "*understand and care*" about the non-White students. Studies have shown that the lived experiences of these young Black men are far too common and shows that Black males are "stereotyped as troublemakers and undisciplined"<sup>130</sup> (p.480) which results in "Black males being sent to the principal office more than their counterparts for more subjective reasons such as 'disrespect' and 'perceived threat.'"<sup>131</sup> (p.1057)

<sup>129</sup> Riddle, T., & Sinclair, S. (2019). Racial disparities in school-based disciplinary actions are associated with county-level rates of racial bias. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 116(17), 8255-8260. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1808307116>. See page 8255

<sup>130</sup> James, C. E. (2012). Students "at risk": stereotypes and the schooling of black boys. *Urban Education*, 47(2), 464-494. See page 480.

<sup>131</sup> Caton, M. T. (2012). Black male perspectives on their educational experiences in high school. *Urban Education*, 47(6), 1055-1085. See page 1057.

Within the LBPSB community, we have seen clear evidence of Black males being perceived as ‘threats’ and ‘troublemakers’. In June 2020, the community was outraged when a young Black male, who was graduating from high school, was labeled as *“most likely to become a wanted criminal”* in the school’s yearbook.<sup>132</sup> From the extensive research done in this area, it has been suggested that “racial bias<sup>133</sup>, particularly explicit bias, is associated with racial disciplinary disparities.”<sup>134</sup> (p.8258) Unfortunately, the “stereotypes of Black males—immigrants, fatherless, athletes, troublemakers, and underachievers—” shape racial biases (both explicit and implicit<sup>135</sup>) and “educators’ conceptions of these youths’ abilities, skills, and aspirations.”<sup>136</sup> These socially constructed stereotypes of young Black males “operate to categorize, essentialize, and disenfranchise young Black male students as they navigate and negotiate the school system.”<sup>137</sup> What often follows from this “web of stereotypes” is young Black males being labeled as “at risk” individuals “who need special educational support” and/or these young males dropping out of school.<sup>138</sup> Young Black males are shaping their identities and figuring out what it means to be a Black male in these unhealthy learning environments, which has long lasting negative repercussions on many. The goal of our education system should be to empower our youths to be proud, strong and autonomous learners, not to disempower them and leave them feeling defeated and helpless.

### 2.7.1 Recommendations

## Recommendations

1. Staff and faculty must undergo professional development which will allow them to become aware of their implicit and explicit biases, and work towards removing these biases;
2. Faculty must undergo professional development in order to learn how to exercise “culturally responsive pedagogical” practices, which “recognize the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning.”<sup>139•140</sup>

<sup>132</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/wanted-criminal-lindsay-place-lbpsb-1.5629575>

<sup>133</sup> “Explicit bias is the traditional conceptualization of bias. With explicit bias, individuals are aware of their prejudices and attitudes toward certain groups.” <https://www.justice.gov/crs/file/836431/>

<sup>134</sup> Riddle, T., & Sinclair, S. (2019). Racial disparities in school-based disciplinary actions are associated with county-level rates of racial bias. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 116(17), 8255–8260. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1808307116>. See page 8258.

<sup>135</sup> Implicit Bias: “...we use the term ‘implicit bias’ to describe when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge. A fairly commonplace example of this is seen in studies that show that white people will frequently associate criminality with black people without even realizing they’re doing it.” <https://perception.org/research/implicit-bias/>

<sup>136</sup> James, C. E. (2012). Students “at risk”: stereotypes and the schooling of black boys. *Urban Education*, 47(2), 464–494. See page 471.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

<sup>138</sup> James, C. E. (2012). Students “at risk”: stereotypes and the schooling of black boys. *Urban Education*, 47(2), 464–494. See page 464.

<sup>139</sup> <https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/strategies-0/culturally-responsive-teaching-0#ladson-billings>

<sup>140</sup> Ladson-Billings, G. (2013). *The dreamkeepers : successful teachers of african american children* (2nd ed.). Wiley.



Gender based double-standards are also evident in school dress codes and “body policing.”<sup>141</sup> Schools with strict dress code policies often contend that the policies are put in place to “prevent in-class distractions, create a workplace-like environment, reduce pressures based on socioeconomic status, and deter gang activity.”<sup>142</sup> However, research shows that “dress codes are used as a justification for openly policing female bodies.”<sup>143</sup> (p.15) A school in Florida made the news because they “altered girls’ yearbook photos to hide their chests and other elements deemed ‘immodest’ under the school’s controversial dress code.”<sup>144</sup> The previously mentioned singling-out of females when it comes to dress code matters is not a situation that is isolated to schools in the US: a search on the internet, using the words “spaghetti straps” and “LBPSB” reveals many codes of conduct which indirectly “police female bodies,” here are some examples:

- “Girls are not to wear spaghetti straps, halter tops, short tops or very short shorts.”<sup>145</sup>
- “...we do not permit clothing that is unnecessarily sexualised or conveys messages inconsistent with good emotional health; no spaghetti straps, crop tops, mini-skirts or short shorts, halter tops.”<sup>146</sup>
- “Skimpy or revealing clothing is not appropriate, i.e.: Short shorts, tank tops, spaghetti straps cut-offs or torn jeans.”<sup>147</sup>

Furthermore, the various codes of conduct often outline what the repercussions will be if the dress code is “violated.” These dress code policies “problematize female bodies” and “contribute to the marginalization of females.”<sup>148</sup>(p.2) So, while these dress codes are supposed to “reduce distractions” in the school environment, “codifying these ideas by prohibiting certain attire within the educational system only further objectifies women,”<sup>149</sup>(p.4) which is ultimately stressful, distracting and disempowering for females. It is unfair for females to have the pressure of being the “gatekeepers of sexuality,” which holds them responsible for “protecting male students from temptation.”<sup>150</sup> In a Teen Vogue article, entitled *This School Just Showed How to Do Dress Codes Right*, it states that “all students and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal ‘distractions’ without regulating individual students’ clothing/self expression.”<sup>151</sup>

### 2.7.2 Recommendations

## Recommendations

1. LBPSB to incorporate additional educational workshops for students and staff facilitating the un-teaching of gender stereotypes disrupting gender norms;
2. LBPSB to task its schools and centers to review all codes of conduct, and ensure that the language used to outline dress codes is neither discriminatory nor victimizing of any genders.

<sup>141</sup> “Body policing” basically refers to the act of someone telling someone else what they can and cannot do with their body.

<sup>142</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/do-school-dress-codes-discriminate-against-girls/2018/08>

<sup>143</sup> Neville-Shepard, M. (2019). Disciplining the female student body: consequential transference in arguments for school dress codes. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 42(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2019.1573771>. See page 15.

<sup>144</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/7890796/high-school-yearbook-girls-photo-altered/>

<sup>145</sup> <https://stpatrick.lbpsb.qc.ca/PARENTS-INFO/Dress-Code>

<sup>146</sup> <https://terryfox.lbpsb.qc.ca/Portals/TerryFox/Documents/Parent-Handbook.pdf?ver=2021-01-14-155000-237>

<sup>147</sup> <https://verdun.lbpsb.qc.ca/Parents-Corner/School-Policies/Dress-code>

<sup>148</sup> Neville-Shepard, M. (2019). Disciplining the female student body: consequential transference in arguments for school dress codes. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 42(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2019.1573771>. See page 2.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. See page 4.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid

<sup>151</sup> <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/anti-body-shaming-high-school-dress-code>



## 2.8 Bullying linked to gender and sexuality

Finally, bullying linked to gender and sexuality is another area where the parents who responded to the social media post and students of LBPSB shared first and second hand examples with our group. Verbal, social, physical and cyber bullying are all commonly experienced in school settings and the following are some examples emanating from the community:

- *"I'm gonna go with my daughter's, which was mine as well back in the 90's. Body shaming for girls. My daughter is a healthy kid who happens to be just like I was as a kid, which is really skinny. She's in 5th grade and this year. There's a little girl who is jealous of her for being friends with some boys (confirmed by the school, not just based on my daughter's words) that spent the whole year picking on my daughter's weight. She kept on telling her that she was ugly, that we could see her bones, that asked her if she was anorexic, told her that she should eat more, asked her if she was starving herself. I'm kinda happy that other kids jumped in to defend her, but I find it sad that 25 years after me, she's still going through the same body shaming I went through."*
- *"My daughter, who is half Bengali and half caucasian, was ridiculed incessantly starting in grade 3 for being "too hairy". They made fun of her dark eyebrows and the hair on her upper lip. She felt like she could never fit in because she wasn't "a white girl" like all her classmates. It has left emotional scars and to this day, at age 14, she still cannot see how beautiful she really is."*
- *"Fat shaming. My daughter is in gr 3. It started this year. She's not even remotely overweight..."*
- *"I am called 'gay' or 'it' on a regular basis in class..."*

Weight bias and gender discrimination can affect one's health and confidence which is evident in these parents and students examples. One of the parents compares her experiences as a child with her daughter's body shaming, reiterating that not much has changed since she was in school. There are long term harmful effects as children and youth subjected to these types of experiences often suffer negative physical, social, emotional, academic, and mental health issues. Beyond addressing these behaviours, it would be important to include follow up discussions utilizing these situations and/or actions as teachable moments. Considering a percentage of students do, in fact, retaliate against their bullies, the way in which consequences are managed is imperative. Therefore our last recommendation is the following:

### 2.8.1 Recommendations

1. School supplementary curriculum should support critical thinking in classroom settings for all students in order to promote active learning;
2. Encourage student reporting of any form of bullying as well as encouraging bystanders to report such activities;
3. Develop a whole-school approach to bullying prevention.

It is important to note that after all of the work and time that our subgroup put into producing these recommendations, we are concerned about their implementation on the part of LBPSB. This is not because we believe that the board does not want to effect change (we know that they want to make change, the strides that they have already made demonstrate this), but we recognize how hard it is to address all of the issues that have been uncovered by the Task Force.

### 2.8.2 Recommendations

## Recommendations

1. The LBPSB should hire a group of individuals who are trained in the area of EDI to help implement and maintain the recommendations;
2. The LBPSB should be in constant communication with the LBPSB wider community in order to be aware of their continuing needs and/or concerns. In other words, LBPSB must keep the channels of communication open, even after the Task Force has been dissolved.

## 2.9 Conclusion

The Task Force was separated into five subgroups: Race & Ethnicities, Religion, Sexualities, Abilities and Genders. Many of the members of the Task Force were questioned by the community *“Why are you all focusing on so many other problems? The reason why you guys were put there was to fight against Anti-Black Racism: clearly there isn’t enough “traction” in this area!”* Even at times, the members of our subgroup questioned why all of the focus wasn’t on Anti-Black racism; then it clicked: “intersectionality.” Intersectionality is defined as “the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.”<sup>152</sup> If you think that transgender, nonconforming and nonbinary youths face many hardships, just imagine the added burden and pain that a Black transgender youth experiences. In one of the research papers referenced in this report, it states that “researchers have found that acts of anti-transgender violence, including murderous attacks, are disproportionately targeted toward **trans women of color**”<sup>153</sup>(p.918): imagine the layers of pain, burden and discrimination that this “hyper marginalized” group of individuals feels. With this being said, peeling back this layer of gender-discrimination is an act of equity: before Blacks can obtain justice and equality, equity must be exercised in order to remove the multiple layers that some Blacks face.

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality>

<sup>153</sup> Wernick, L. J., Kulick, A., & Chin, M. (2017). Gender identity disparities in bathroom safety and wellbeing among high school students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(5), 917-930. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0652-1> (p. 918)

While this chapter placed a great emphasis on raising awareness of the necessity to dismantle the barriers that are created by gender which prevent transgender, nonbinary and nonconforming youths from having access to an optimal learning environment, this chapter also aimed to highlight that dismantling crippling gender binary systems within the LBPSB is not only important to this group of marginalized individuals, it is important to the entire LBPSB community, regardless of their gender. Negative effects of gender binary systems can also be seen throughout the entire population (not just within the transgender community). One research paper contends that “the more one agrees with gender stereotypes, the lower one’s school achievement is (this finding is valid for both boys and girls).”<sup>154</sup> (p.281) Research also shows that the socially constructed idea of gender often confines and restricts individuals - a classic example of this can be observed within the STEM<sup>155</sup> fields where females continue to be underrepresented because Science “has been widely characterised as a masculine terrain.”<sup>156</sup> In the beginning of the chapter, we established that an optimal learning environment is one which fosters growth and allows a child to develop into the best version of themselves: the previously-mentioned ideas demonstrate that a gender binary school system does not permit this.

Universal Design (UD) is defined as “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability, etc.”<sup>157</sup> a similar framework ought to be applied to the design and construction of an optimal learning environment. In other words, in order to construct an optimal learning environment, one must have a universal design which is void of any barriers.

<sup>154</sup> Bouchard, P., & St-Amant, J.-C. (2000). Gender identities and school success. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 46(3), 281-83. (page 281)

<sup>155</sup> STEM stands for “Science Technology Engineering Math”

<sup>156</sup> Francis, B., Archer, L., Moote, J., de Witt, J., & Yeomans, L. (2017). Femininity, science, and the denigration of the girly girl. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 38(8), 1097-1110.

<sup>157</sup> <https://uwaterloo.ca/library/aoda-toolkit/universal-design>

# Chapter 3. Sexualities



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## Glossary

**Sex** is a category assigned at birth according to a person's set of external genitalia, and also refers to their chromosomal or hormonal makeup, in a medical context. In biology, sex is not strictly binary (either male or female), and so the boundaries of rigidly assigned sexual categories are often troubled when compared to real people.

**2SLGBTQIA+** is an acronym for regrouping sexual and gender minorities together. It stands for: Two-spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual/Pansexual, Trans/non-binary/gender-nonconforming, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, and more.

**Gender expression** describes the ways one engages with gendered norms of appearance and behaviour. This may or may not be aligned with what is expected of one's assigned sex and presumed gender identity.

**Queer** is a reclaimed slur that is now often used as an identifier, and as an umbrella term to refer to LGBTQIA2S+ people.

**Sexualities**, like gender identities, can be static or fluid. Beyond the heterosexual/homosexual binary, there exist many variations of sexual and romantic attraction. (eg: bisexual or pansexual, asexual or aromantic, etc).

**Two-spirit** refers to people whose Indigenous, Inuit, or Métis identity intersects with an LGBTQIA+ identity.

**Gender** is a collection of supposedly inherent qualities, range of abilities, interests, attitudes, etc., as they are described in a specific time and place, that is often paired with a specific sexual assignment. Gender identity can be in line with one's assigned sex (ie. cisgender), or not (ie. transgender), or something in between. The relationship between gender and sex, and associated social attitudes, can be named or not, static or fluid, queer, etc. (eg: non-binary, genderqueer, gender-neutral, queer, questioning, x, etc.)

## 3.0 Introduction

This chapter will assess current policies and practices as they relate to the needs and accommodations necessary for students as they develop, learn about and express their sexuality throughout elementary, secondary and adult education. For youth, schools are:

*a primary institution for identity formation.... They are important sites for the construction of race, class, and gender inequalities as well as pivotal locations of social change in challenging these inequalities. Social groups in schools, such as cliques, provide one of the ways that youth begin to identify and position themselves by social class, gender, and race.* <sup>158</sup> (Pascoe, 2007, p.18)

<sup>158</sup> Pascoe, C.J. (2007). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Conforming to and performing gendered and sexual expectations is part of the work all students do as they form their sexual identity, try to maintain social status, and keep themselves afloat at school. While it is especially difficult for queer, trans, intersex, gender non-conforming and two-spirit students to navigate this pressure, it is no less difficult for *all* students to sustain themselves in this environment. The impacts of these pressures are felt well into adulthood, as even students who do not seem obviously impacted can feel the consequences of a negative experience throughout their lives, in ways that are often not immediately visible.<sup>159</sup> With this in mind, this chapter will address processes in the school environment that impact equity and inclusivity across the themes of *awareness*; covering pedagogical resources; *policy*, to address students needs in the development of their sexual identities, to improve accessibility and provide reasonable accommodations for them; and *safe facilities*, to re-examine anti-bullying policy and practice, to provide safe spaces for students, and to ensure their value and self-worth within the school climate. These recommendations do not only address the needs of LGBTQIA2s+ students, who likely exist in every classroom across all schools<sup>160</sup>, but aim to support the healthy, considered sexual development of all students, so that they all may be ensured an equitable school experience.

### 3.1 School policies

It is very important that school policy emphasizes the value of their student body's sexual and gendered diversity, and a commitment to addressing and preventing harms that would damage their healthy development and relations to each other. The TF has found positive instances where good practice and access to resources have enabled staff to support students with different sexual identities, however more support is needed and more specific policies must be put in place to facilitate this work. Policies, such as the Safe and Caring School Policy, that commit to aspirational values such as “a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, and equality of sexes based on the principles of respect, diversity and inclusion”<sup>161</sup>, disguise the reality of inclusivity in practice; that decisions about the ways marginalized groups are included into a majority are determined by a limited, dominant group.<sup>162</sup> “Canada is not a cultural mosaic, but a vertical mosaic, meaning that the Other is included (ie ‘tolerated’) in the hierarchical space that the dominant structure allows them to reside in.”<sup>163</sup> Policies centered on “nebulous ideas” that blend differences together and “promote a color-blind, transnational discourse,...suggest that the (white Canadian) educator has nothing to do with oppression—e.g. [homophobia, transphobia, racism], (neo)colonialism, etc.” (Heringer, 2020, p.55)<sup>164</sup> when this is not the case. The ideologies that do cause harm to students in their sexual development, namely cissexism, heteronormativity, homonormativity, sexism, orientalism, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and ableism, are not named in places such as the Safe and Caring Schools Policy and Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence

<sup>159</sup> Kumashiro, K. (2000). Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53. doi:10.2307/1170593

<sup>160</sup> Taylor, Catherine & Peter T. (2011) *Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*. Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

<sup>161</sup> LBPSB. *Safe and Caring Schools Act*.

<sup>162</sup> Heringer, Rebecca (2020). Reconceptualizing Anti-Oppressive Education: A Lesson From the Other. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education* 15(2): pp. 57. <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE>

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

<sup>164</sup> Ibid

policy. These ideologies risk remaining embedded in typical school climates unless a specific effort is made to call out and disrupt them. More specific, situated and contextual policies are required to ensure equity and inclusivity for all students. A recommendation for a more specific policy covering student sexuality will be discussed further.

For two-spirit and other Indigenous students to feel safe and valued in their school community, a practical relationship between their school and community needs to be established. The bridge between their communities and their school must be built on “the practical work of understanding,” what can be understood as “the art and practice of neighborliness, based in mutual respect, co-equality, common goals, and regularized channels of communication,” (Epp, 2008, p.138)<sup>165</sup> as well as a recognition that the nations they are a part of have maintained a resilient “cultural continuity” throughout centuries of occupation. As such, changes should be made to school policy to reflect this understanding.

### **3.1.1 Recommendation**

## *Recommendations*

It is recommended that the Safe and Caring Schools Act be amended to include an acknowledgment that all students are Treaty people engaged in mutual relationships with the original and current stewards of the land, that they should be knowledgeable about their rights and duties as Treaty people, and that they be engaged towards the values described above.

### **3.1.2 Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Safe and Caring Schools Policy be amended to reflect an appropriate understanding of anti-oppressive practices in schools, to specifically name the systems of oppression and ideologies that cause inequality for all students and in the development of their gendered and sexual identities.

<sup>165</sup> Epp, Roger (2008). *We Are All Treaty People: Prairie Essays*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press. pp. 120-141



## 3.2 Sexual and gendered violence

This section of the report will explain some of the context for sexual and gendered divisions and violence, and offer tools for educators to aid in the development of students' healthy sexual identity and behaviours. Students' gender and sexual identities are formed through their day-to-day actions and interactions with each other, as they learn, manage and reproduce gendered behaviours. "Gender is not just natural, or something one is, but ... something we all produce through our actions. By repeatedly acting 'feminine' or 'masculine' we actually create those categories. Becoming gendered, becoming masculine or feminine, is a process."<sup>166</sup> (Pascoe, 2007, p.13) Masculinity and femininity are not traits that are innate to people with male or female bodies, not just because the boundaries of what a male or female body *is* is not as obvious as one would assume; they are traits that are created through the act of doing them. Adolescence and youth culture in North America, especially since the emergence of large public high schools, is largely centered around heterosexual rituals and courtship that are expressed in school imaging, yearbooks, the structure of school dances, and in classrooms, etc.<sup>167</sup> As one student explains quite clearly:

*"I feel like in general the Lester B. Pearson's school board program, classes, presentation and all around influence is very straight and cisgender. Which results in me feeling unwanted, unloved, and judged in a negative and frankly oppressive way....I can't even explain to you how much my anxiety has spiked since you announced we were going to school full time, because I fear my other students. In my own school I am afraid of my students who should be my friends."*

### 3.2.1 Historical influences of gender expressions

In Canada, sexual norms have been influenced by the histories of colonialism, christian expansionism and capitalism. From these histories we can understand the stories and stereotypes that have shaped perceptions of sexuality, different judgments of morality, deviancy, acceptability and risk in sexual behaviour; ideologies that have led to the exotification and fetishisation of others, to distorted ideas about who requires sexual protection or liberation; and the economic and social forces that have shaped sexual behaviour for the past several centuries. When harmful ideas about gender and sexuality go unchallenged; when students are not given the proper tools to think about how these histories and norms relate to the ways they fit in to the school environment and beyond, the dangers of sexual harassment, violence, and other divisions and harms continue to operate freely, and throughout all of their lives.

<sup>166</sup> Pascoe, C.J. (2007). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid

Norms of masculinity and femininity have important effects for the experience of sexuality for all groups of people. This often has effects that reach other aspects of students' lives, long before they are sexually active because, as shall be seen later on, many elements of gendered behaviour are inherently sexualized in their meanings. As social boundaries around sexuality are created and maintained, certain groups are dominated by others; some people face exclusion because of their behaviour, dress or interests; many are not taught to recognize, assert, or respect physical and emotional boundaries, and many more experience their gender and sexuality through the history of colonisation.

Ideal masculinity is a paradox, an unachievable and contradictory standard that no man alive is able to meet. So much of boys' behaviour between them has sexualized, or gendered meanings,<sup>168</sup> as one student told the TF in a letter:

*"I do see many people being very homophobic and proud of it. They use gay as an insult and the f-word a lot in their vocabulary. When it comes to sexism, I usually go through most of it in gym class, when the boys don't want to pass it to anyone else. Or when they make stupid jokes about how women aren't funny or that we should be in the kitchen making a sandwich."*

Through these "sexual discourses and practices that indicate dominance and control," (Pascoe, 2007, p.13)<sup>169</sup> students are ordered into a hierarchy according to how well they are able to meet this standard, or not. Masculinity is constructed as something that is explicitly *not* feminine, *not* gay, *not* expressive, *not* unsuccessful, *not* physically weak or hurt, even if only for a moment. The result is that feminine boys, people with non-normative genders and sexualities, and girls, find themselves at the bottom of the pecking order. This pressure to properly act like a man, as if it was a ball being thrown from boy to boy, is confronted mostly through humour<sup>170</sup> and sexual humour, or by deflecting attention to someone lower in the hierarchy. These strategies are used to avoid the fear and anxiety of being labelled an unmasculine 'other' by their peers. As one researcher puts it:

*"Any boy can temporarily become a fag in a given social space or interaction. ... becoming a fag has as much to do with failing at the masculine tasks of competence, heterosexual prowess, and strength or in any way revealing weakness or femininity as it does with a sexual identity. This fluidity of the fag identity is what makes the specter of the fag such a powerful disciplinary mechanism. It is fluid enough that boys police their behaviors out of fear of having the fag identity permanently adhere and definitive enough so that boys recognize a fag behavior and strive to avoid it. (Pascoe, 2007, p.49)"<sup>171</sup>*

This is an example of what is meant by gender policing, or the ways students subconsciously and explicitly monitor each other's behaviour to enforce gendered norms. This form of masculinity rejects the discomfort of possibly being seen as less powerful, this rejected, feminine 'other.'

<sup>168</sup> Pascoe, C. J. (2013). Notes on a Sociology of Bullying: Young Men's Homophobia as Gender Socialization. QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking, 87-104. doi:10.14321/qed.0087

<sup>169</sup> Pascoe, C.J. (2007). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

<sup>170</sup> Pascoe, C. J. (2013). Notes on a Sociology of Bullying: Young Men's Homophobia as Gender Socialization. QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking, 87-104. doi:10.14321/qed.0087

<sup>171</sup> Pascoe, C.J. (2007). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

### 3.2.1.1 Masculine sexuality stereotypes

For Black and other racialized students who identify as male, masculinity is expressed under additional constraints. For much of recent history, Black men have been stereotyped as being hyper-aggressive and hyper-sexualized on the whole, perceived as older and more threatening than their peers.<sup>172</sup> In the school environment, this manifests in the ways Black boys are routinely punished more severely and harshly for the same sexualized behaviours as white boys.<sup>173</sup>

*Teenagers are seen as inherently sexual and black men are seen as extremely sexual. So the sexual behavior of African American teenage boys is taken much more seriously than that of white boys. In [a] study of sixth-grade African American boys, ... teachers and administrators attributed an intentionality to African American boys' misbehavior that they did not attribute to white boys' misdeeds. When white boys misbehaved, teachers excused them with a resigned "boys will be boys" response. However, when African American boys joked, spoke out, or otherwise misbehaved in the classroom or schoolyard, adults at the school Ferguson studied assumed that they were doing so on purpose. This assumption of an adult intentionality results in harsher punishments for African American boys."*<sup>174</sup> (Pascoe, 2007, p.49)

The way that certain behaviours seem to be more consistently punished in non-white students should make clear two things: that educators *do* see a problem when sexist attitudes are expressed by boys, but also that selective, disproportionate punishment is not an appropriate or equitable method to actually prevent sexual harassment and violence. Boys, and especially racialized boys, also face gender bias, which influences their academic engagement and goals, where showing interest in "disciplines such as art, literature, and the social sciences," (Majied, 2010, p.115)<sup>175</sup> is routinely punished by their peers, and discouraged by educators in subtle, normalized ways.

If educators do recognize that students are harmed by restrictive forms of masculinity, they should embrace and model alternative ways of being masculine, and feminine, to counter these. Men and boys themselves are not innately responsible for the ways they act masculine, and are not necessarily safe from the harms of sexism.<sup>176</sup> Harmful behaviours are learned, and are inflicted on all students. Researchers emphasize that working to undo these harms means not simply reprimanding boys for expressing sexist ideologies, it means "looking for the 'goodness' in boys' actions," fostering and encouraging "the acceptance of other representations of masculinity

<sup>172</sup> Goeff et al. cited in Maynard, Robyn (2017). The Miseducation of Black Youth from *Fernwood Publishing* Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada slavery to the present. pp.208-228

<sup>173</sup> Pascoe, C.J. (2007). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Los Angeles: University of California Press

<sup>174</sup> Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Majied, K. (2010). The Impact of Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression Bias on African American Students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 79(2), 151-165.

<sup>176</sup> The Combahee River Collective (1977). "The Combahee River Collective Statement".

[http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html?fbclid=IwAR2ly0yvFbHv6uet3CshS1UkrK99dVo-9P5zdzGzImN\\_XVqF3WNzxY4aloM](http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html?fbclid=IwAR2ly0yvFbHv6uet3CshS1UkrK99dVo-9P5zdzGzImN_XVqF3WNzxY4aloM)

as equal, ...documenting boys' willingness to talk about and to be accountable for their actions," and their personal ideas about what it means to be masculine.<sup>177</sup> For educators, this means to:

*find strategies that focus on boys' relationships. ...Allowing for the development of a range of relationships in school provides the opportunity to explore and mediate differences on common ground, within defined parameters, and builds communication and conflict-resolution skills. ... to concentrate on developing boys' levels of ... cultural knowledge, ... recognizing alternative forms of representing truth and understanding cultural phenomena from the perspectives of others.*<sup>178</sup>(Imms, 2000, p.162)

Encouraging and modelling new and imaginative ways of being masculine, moving away from ideals like competitiveness, exclusion and dominance,<sup>179</sup> in and out of classrooms, as well as disrupting the ideologies that lead to incidents of sexual harassment and assault, are important for all students to develop a healthy relationship to their sexuality.

### **3.2.1.2 Feminine sexuality stereotypes**

There are also problems in the way femininity and feminine sexuality are addressed in the school environment. A significant problem is that a primary tool in managing sexual violence is *silence* about sexual violence, while the elements that lead to them (sexism, transphobia, homophobia, compulsory heterosexuality, racism, etc.) often go unaddressed. There is a "presumed correlation between educator silence and a decrease in those silenced activities, that not discussing sex and sexual assault will prevent them from happening. Programs that focus on the *effects* of sex, pregnancy and STBIs, over the concept of pleasure, promote *fear* rather than 'the kind of agency necessary to make empowered sexual decisions.'<sup>180</sup> (Pomerantz, 2013, p.60) As Kalamuya Salaam points out, "as long as male domination exists, rape will exist. Only women revolting and men made conscious of their responsibility to fight sexism can collectively stop rape."(Lorde, 1984, p.120)<sup>181</sup> For girls, subtle and obvious silences about their sexuality, such as basic elements of their physiology and its function (the clitoris: pleasure), keep them from learning and replicating autonomy and agency in their relationships and sexual behaviour. While popular ideas about 'girl power' and mainstream feminism seem to paint a picture of a post-sexist society, with girls increasingly breaking gender conventions, entering higher education and gaining economic mobility in greater numbers, they still feel pressures that find them navigating the careful line between acceptable and unacceptable feminine behaviour

<sup>177</sup> Imms, W. (2000). Multiple Masculinities and the Schooling of Boys. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne De L'éducation*, 25(2), 152-165. doi:10.2307/1585748

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

<sup>179</sup> Imms, W. (2000). Multiple Masculinities and the Schooling of Boys. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne De L'éducation*, 25(2), 152-165. doi:10.2307/1585748

<sup>180</sup> Pomerantz, S., Raby, R., & Stefanik, A. (2013). Girls Run the World? Caught between Sexism and Postfeminism in School. *Gender and Society*, 27(2), 185-207.

<sup>181</sup> Cited in Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), pp. 114-123.

and sexuality.<sup>182</sup> They, as well as all students, need the language to be able to articulate their experience of these pressures, as well as language to emphatically understand and practice consent in all of their relationships, at all ages. Without this:

*The result is a stereotypically gendered sexuality: boys as sexual aggressors and girls as sexual avoiders. ... As girls' own sexual desires become clouded by others' expectations and they experience sexuality as a source of trouble above anything else. ... Educators, parents and media restrict girls' sexual agency by treating sexual desire and expression as things to be contained or overtly rejected. ... Feminists advocate a discourse of desire that teaches girls to explore their own sexual pleasure and to assert their wants and needs. Teaching girls to be sexually entitled, from this perspective, undercuts male domination.*<sup>183</sup> (Froyum, 2010, p.61)

### **3.2.1.3 Sexuality, race and ethnicity**

For Black, Indigenous, Asian, Arab, and other racialized girls, harmful ideologies still influence how their sexual development and behaviour are perceived, monitored and controlled. Black girls notably, are seen as more overtly sexual, and so are more scrutinized and policed in their everyday behaviour, to similar degrees as Black boys, but for different reasons. One student told the TF about the regular comments she receives about her appearance:

*"...when people come back from vacation, when they say 'I'm almost as black as you are' or even when they say 'you're pretty for a black girl'" and many more backhanded compliments. These are only a few of the things I get told in a predominantly white school."*

Researchers note historical precedents that have equated Black female sexuality with provocation and poverty, where sexual assertion is seen as subversive, unfeminine and immoral.<sup>184</sup> One student told the TF in a letter:

*"One of the staff at the time had stated that we needed to quiet down, but without ending it there she had also stated that she understands that "Black women are boisterous but we need to keep it down because this is school ground."*

A similar type of rhetoric is repeated for Indigenous women and girls, even as they endure a pervasive cultural silence about the sexualized violence and control over their reproductive health that is systemically committed against them.<sup>185</sup> Cultural norms surrounding assertive women and women who assert their sexuality continue to influence perceptions of racialized women especially. Notably, the taboos and legal restrictions surrounding sex work in Canada have served as a pretext to monitor and control racialized womens' mobility in public space and

<sup>182</sup> Froyum, C. (2010). Making 'good girls': Sexual agency in the sexuality education of low-income black girls. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 12(1), 59-72.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid

<sup>184</sup> Majied, K. (2010). The Impact of Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression Bias on African American Students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 79(2), 151-165. Retrieved May 27, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20798333>

<sup>185</sup> MacMahon, Martin (2021). Claims B.C. Indigenous Girls Forcibly Given IUD Shock Youth Advocate. *CityNews*. [citynews1130.com/2021/05/21/bc-indigenous-children-iud-forced/](http://citynews1130.com/2021/05/21/bc-indigenous-children-iud-forced/)



in the economy, and this legal and moral framework has extended its reach to the control of all women, as well as queer and trans people.<sup>186</sup> Additionally, western and colonial notions of purity and deviancy are applied to women and girls from non-western cultures in the form of exotification and fetishization. Arab, and Asian girls are objectified in multiple and intersectional ways, and, alongside Indigenous and Black girls, are continually denied an understanding of their sexual autonomy, sovereignty, on their own terms. The effects of these ideologies are increasingly distressing, such as those seen in the recent Atlanta shootings of Asian women who were thought to be ‘provocative’ sex workers<sup>187</sup>, and in legal restrictions placed on women who wear modesty dress in public-facing occupations. As another student notes:

*“A group of White girls were fetishizing Black men and mixed babies to their friends. Overhearing this conversation, I understood they saw Black people as nothing but an accessory.”*

It is clear that ideologies that continue to harm nearly every group of students in their understanding of their sexuality are already heard, replicated and likely internalized by students in school every day, and silence about these issues will not disrupt these processes.

### **3.2.1.4 Creation of policies addressing harmful ideologies**

Responding to these problems requires a situated policy that addresses and disrupts these ideologies explicitly. Such a policy would emphasize the board’s dedication to naming and disrupting the ideologies of cissexism, heteronormativity, homonormativity, sexism, orientalism, anti-Black, anti-Indigenous and anti-Asian racism, and ableism, as they apply to queer people and to all sexual identities.<sup>188</sup> Such a policy would also acknowledge that students have the liberty to identify with any gender, or none, and that this identification be understood, accepted and encouraged by school staff; that they be free to express their gender as they wish, and that they have a right to learn about and name all aspects of sexual identity so they can comfortably assume and understand their own in a healthy, considered way free of harrassment and discrimination, in an environment that is centered around vocal consent and an understanding of bodily sovereignty. For racialized, Black or Indigenous students, this sovereignty means a right to understand and express their sexuality in an environment free of romanticization, exotification and other covert and/or ‘benevolent’ stereotyping, disrupting a history of colonized sexuality.<sup>189</sup>

<sup>186</sup> Maynard, Robyn (2017). Misogynoir in Canada from *Fernwood Publishing* Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada slavery to the present. pp. 128-157

<sup>187</sup> Li, Sara (2021). In the Atlanta Shooting, We Can’t Ignore the Link Between Racism and Classism. *teenVogue*.

<sup>188</sup> Taylor, Catherine & Peter T. (2011) *Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*. Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

<sup>189</sup> Driskill, Q. (2004). Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic. *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, 16(2), 50-64.



The policy should ensure the right of any student to be referred to by their preferred name and correct pronouns. Trans, non-binary and two-spirit students preferred names and correct pronouns should be validated in school documentation wherever possible (in emails, by substitute teachers, on awards, etc). While it does not relate directly to accommodating students' sexual identities, It would be advised to extend this framework for validating (and remembering) students' names to students with names that are uncommon or considered difficult to pronounce. As one parent expressed, it was difficult for teachers to consistently call her child by their proper name throughout years of schooling:

*"no matter how many times I tried to help them pronounce and write it down to help, they called her names like **"Name Deleted for privacy"** or **"Name Deleted for privacy"**. Not just one educator, but most of the educators. She started refusing to say her name and still does."*

This policy should affirm that a student has a right to privacy with regards to their assigned sex, gender identity, and their sexuality, especially in scenarios where students may use a different name or pronouns than they do at home and their parents may or may not be aware of this. It is imperative to devise a simple framework that can allow teachers and staff to call students by their proper name and ensure their confidentiality in doing so. The TF would refer policy writers to the policy on trans students from the Commission scolaire de Montréal, as well model policies on queer students and for dress codes from the *Dignity in Schools Campaign*, and recommendations from the National Survey of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canadian schools.

#### 3.2.1.5 Recommendation

It is recommended that a policy be created or an existing policy be amended to cover the needs of all students in naming and assuming a healthy sexual identity, understanding the histories outlined above in classes and in the school environment, addressing their specific needs and affirming their value in the school environment, and especially to accommodate the needs of trans, intersex, non-binary, two-spirit, queer, (dis)abled, racialized and non-western students in achieving this goal.

#### 3.2.1.6 Recommendation

It is recommended that a procedure be put in place to facilitate the recognition of each students' chosen name, proper pronunciation and correct pronouns in school documentation, attendance lists, by teachers and substitute teachers, etc., especially in the case of trans and non-binary students.

### 3.3 Safe facilities

It is important for all students to feel like they are valued members of the school environment.<sup>190</sup> A first step in ensuring this sense of security and value is ensuring that schools contain and are themselves safe spaces for all students. For two-spirit, queer, trans and gender non-conforming students and through research, it is well understood that gender-segregated spaces, namely washrooms and changing rooms, are places where students often feel unsafe.<sup>191•192</sup> There is a need for all students to have unrestricted spaces where they can take care of their personal needs without the threat of harassment, violence or other harms. As well, accounting for queer students in the design of a communal space allows an opportunity to explicitly accommodate the needs of (dis)abled students, integrating both of these communities into common spaces rather than spaces that are often removed from and invisible to the rest of the student population. With proper design, an all-gender washroom can drastically change the relationship students have to this often overlooked shared space, and especially if work is done to familiarize them with them as a normal part of the public environment. A member of the community provided in a letter a very succinct call for the installation of all-gender washrooms, with specific guidelines for their implementation and usage. They highlighted that these washrooms should:

*“be accessible at all times and part of the student section of the school. It should be like every other washroom. All students should have access to this washroom if they feel comfortable using it. (it’s not labelled the Trans Bathroom or the Non Binary bathroom). ... The door should not be locked to prohibit students from using it. Rather students should not have to ask to use it.”*

With this in mind:

#### 3.3.1 Recommendation

It is recommended that, for all-gender washrooms, pictograms showing gendered figures be replaced with signage that shows which facilities are available, with pictograms showing a toilet, the presence of urinals, their accessibility, etc. and pictograms showing the available facilities and the washroom’s gender be used for washrooms that will remain gendered.

#### 3.3.2 Recommendation

It is recommended that at least 1 all-gender washroom be installed in every floor of each building, in every major section of each school.

<sup>190</sup> Elizabethe Payne & Melissa Smith. (2013). LGBTQ Kids, School Safety, and Missing the Big Picture: How the Dominant Bullying Discourse Prevents School Professionals from Thinking about Systemic Marginalization or ... Why We Need to Rethink LGBTQ Bullying. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 1-36. doi:10.14321/qed.0001

<sup>191</sup> Taylor, Catherine & Peter T. (2011) *Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*. Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid

### 3.4 Physical education and changing rooms

With regards to gymnasiums, locker rooms and changing rooms, these spaces can be fraught for all students, and especially trans, queer and gender non-conforming youth. With the need to maintain privacy or discretion and to avoid unwanted encounters or aggression in isolated spaces, certain accommodations should be made freely available for students who ask for them, without the need to validate or verify their sexual or gendered identity. This would require that each individual school develop their own situated policy with the confidential aid of trans, gender non-conforming, (dis)abled, and queer students of each school. These accommodations could range from the installation of privacy stalls or partitions in each gendered changing room, to a private changing space being made available, to an allowance for students who have made an agreement with their teacher(s) to change earlier or later than other students, if no space is made available, or any other arrangement depending on the facilities.

#### 3.4.1 Recommendation

It is recommended that each school develop its own policy, with the confidential aid of queer, trans, gender non-conforming and (dis)abled students regarding accommodations in the use of changing rooms.

#### 3.4.2 Recommendation

It is recommended that physical education teachers, as well as other educators, refrain from dividing class groups by gender whenever possible, so as not to alienate trans and gender non-conforming students, so as to discourage gendered divisions between students.

### 3.5 Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or Friendship, Love and Sexual Health (FLASH) groups

Spaces where queer students can meet, share experiences and form community bonds are important for their safety and well-being. It is important that these spaces be explicitly supported by each school, that they be maintained from year to year and that they be established without the need for students to initiate this work. It would be a disservice to queer students to assume that, as they had not yet spoken up, there was no interest in founding these groups. Students of all ages and all sexual identities benefit from having a space where they can meet others who are like them, have access to resources, guidance and information on various topics relating to their sexual identity, mental health and wellness, advocacy, etc., and where they can organize their community to better understand and meet their needs. This applies doubly for racialized queer students who often experience a double exclusion from spaces meant for either queer or racialized students. As well, there are many in the (dis)abled and queer communities who, finding powerful solidarity between each other, advocate for the inclusion of (dis)abled

people in queer spaces, so that they too can find appropriate resources and community to aid in their understanding of their own unique experiences of sexuality.<sup>193•194</sup> Many students have highlighted that this burden to provide education for their peers about their queer and/or trans identity, or to carefully unpick harmful ideologies that they hear in the hallways, for example, has fallen on them, when they would prefer that this labour be proactively taken on by school faculty. An open space with dedicated, appropriate staff on hand would be a first step in alleviating some of this burden. Access to these groups should not be restricted solely to queer youth; while some feel that these groups *should* be restricted to queer youth only, the TF feels that the value in these groups can only add to the health of a school environment if the community and resources they provide are open to all students. These groups have commonly been referred to as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or Friendship, Love and Sexual Health (FLASH) groups, but it is important that students be allowed to name the group as they want in their respective schools.

### 3.5.1 Recommendation

## Recommendations

It is recommended that each school (from the elementary level to adult education) maintain FLASH groups for trans, two-spirit, queer and (dis)abled students, and especially racialized students of those groups, but that these be open to students of all sexual identities. (i.e. that membership not be exclusive or restrictive, and be kept confidential).

### 3.5.2 Recommendation

It is recommended that these clubs be advertised by the school administration, have the same recognition and benefits of other student clubs, including advertisement in schools, a provided space to meet, funding and staffing whenever possible, recognition in the yearbook, and eligibility for students to receive leadership awards for their participation, etc.

<sup>193</sup> Kafer, A. (2009). What's Crip About Queer Theory Now? *Sex Roles*, 60, 291-294.

<sup>194</sup> Cohen, J.J. (2015). Queer Crip Sex and Critical Mattering. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21(1), 153-162. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/566792>.

### 3.6 Bullying

To install safe spaces for a marginalized group is to recognize that the rest of the school environment may be unsafe.<sup>195</sup> From this perspective, it is possible to see how much more needs to be done beyond this first, though vital, step. For LBPSB students, they report feeling most unsafe in the hallways of their schools. For gender and sexual minority students in general, up to half of them:

- *Report having experienced sexual harassment at school. Trans students face appallingly high levels of harassment, including bullying, sexual harassment and violence. Over one quarter of transgender students reported hearing teachers make transphobic comments on a daily or weekly basis. Almost half of transgender students have skipped school due to feeling unsafe. Youth of colours who are gender and sexual minorities face particularly high rates of physical harassment and assault at school because of the multiple layers of stigmatization they face.*<sup>196</sup> (Maynard, 2017, p.224)
- *58% of straight students ... said that they too found it upsetting to hear homophobic comments.... Statistically, about the same number of heterosexual students as LGBTQ students are homophobically harassed.*<sup>197</sup> (Taylor, 2011, p.8)

#### 3.6.1 Sexuality and bullying

Transphobic and homophobic bullying, especially combined with racially motivated bullying, remain one of the greatest challenges that students face in school. As explained in the sections above, even students who do not identify as queer can still be bullied in the same ways as actual queer students. Similarly, students are often called slurs that are not at all related to their actual ethnicity; this does not make these aggressions less harmful. While the TF recognizes the efforts of faculty in ensuring the safety of students, and in specifically highlighting homophobia and racism in the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence plan, the approaches outlined in much of the available policy seem to address bullying in a way that can only curb, or ‘manage’, it, treating the symptoms rather than truly disrupting its root causes.<sup>198</sup> Simply put, managing levels of harmful behaviour, emphasizing the *tolerance* of difference while missing covert behaviours that uphold and police these differences, is not enough to prevent systemic harm.<sup>199</sup> There is a dramatic shift taking place in the understanding of bullying behaviours, beyond the idea that it is simply an

<sup>195</sup> Elizabethe Payne, & Melissa Smith. (2013). LGBTQ Kids, School Safety, and Missing the Big Picture: How the Dominant Bullying Discourse Prevents School Professionals from Thinking about Systemic Marginalization or ... Why We Need to Rethink LGBTQ Bullying. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 1-36. doi:10.14321/qed.0001

<sup>196</sup> Maynard, Robyn (2017). The Miseducation of Black Youth from *Fernwood Publishing* Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada slavery to the present. pp. 208-228

<sup>197</sup> Taylor, Catherine & Peter T. (2011) *Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*. Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

<sup>198</sup> Elizabethe Payne & Melissa Smith. (2013). LGBTQ Kids, School Safety, and Missing the Big Picture: How the Dominant Bullying Discourse Prevents School Professionals from Thinking about Systemic Marginalization or ... Why We Need to Rethink LGBTQ Bullying. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 1-36. doi:10.14321/qed.0001

<sup>199</sup> Stanley, E., Spade, D., & Queer (In)Justice. (2012). Queering Prison Abolition, Now? *American Quarterly*, 64(1), 115-127. Retrieved May 9, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41412834>

intentional, repeated act on the part of an aggressor, with a power imbalance between them and their victim.<sup>200</sup> A large problem in this approach is the difficulty in addressing covert aggression, or microaggressions, as well as bullies with high social statuses, or ‘good’ bullies.<sup>201</sup> This more rigid, individualized classification identifies students as victim, perpetrator, or bystander, but does not take into account the ways bullying behaviour works to determine and reinforce social hierarchies, along racial, sexual, religious, or other lines, that make these roles more fluid in practice.<sup>202-203</sup> There are many ways in which these processes can be expressed by students, some based on an easily identifiable variable, such as sexuality; others on other variables such as race. In any event, authority figures such as teachers must be aware of these harmful behaviours and do what is necessary to correct them. These normalized, invisible, or more permissible behaviours, and those carried out by ‘good’ bullies, are no less harmful than explicit aggression and are part of the status processes described earlier. As a few students and a teacher informed the TF in their letters:

*“During the play the school put on last year, the majority white cast would constantly use the n word. One of the leads went up to a Black crew member and said it right in his face... A group of boys would use the N word and joke about stereotypes surrounding Black people in class. They even did it within earshot of their one Black classmate. The school had set a precedent of protecting racist language and behaviours, so the boys were fearless.”*

*“...a Secondary 1 boy had called one of his school mates a Nigger (sic). The administration protected him. The boy sat there telling everyone if you do anything, you’ll get expelled. He knew he was safe....”*

*“...one of my students came to my classroom and showed me a white patch on her scalp. Someone had pulled her hair out by the roots... Apparently, there was a feud going on between some... black and white girls which revolved around the use of the N-word. As it turned out, all the students involved were my students: bright, pleasant young ladies, active in sports, and I’m convinced one of them would have been Valedictorian the following year.*

<sup>200</sup> Pascoe, C. J. (2013). Notes on a Sociology of Bullying: Young Men’s Homophobia as Gender Socialization. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 87-104. doi:10.14321/qed.0087

<sup>201</sup> Schott, Robin M., Sondergaard, Dorte M. (2014). School Bullying, New Theories in Context, *Cambridge University Press*. pp.93

<sup>202</sup> Elizabette Payne, & Melissa Smith. (2013). LGBTQ Kids, School Safety, and Missing the Big Picture: How the Dominant Bullying Discourse Prevents School Professionals from Thinking about Systemic Marginalization or ... Why We Need to Rethink LGBTQ Bullying. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 1-36.

<sup>203</sup> Pascoe, C. J. (2013). Notes on a Sociology of Bullying: Young Men’s Homophobia as Gender Socialization. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 87-104. doi:10.14321/qed.0087



### 3.6.2 *Bullying as a social act*

Bullying and aggression between students should not be understood as a specific instance of anti-social behaviour between a perpetrator, who should be punished, and a victim, who should be protected. This only serves to vilify one student (perpetuating *certain* ‘bad’ bullies’ anti-social tendencies) and further marginalizes the other (marking them as ‘in need of protection’, and so, weak, or lacking social capital).<sup>204</sup> Bullying needs to be understood as a *highly social act*<sup>205</sup> that, in part, forms a young person’s attitudes about difference and what is normal,<sup>206</sup> something that is even done between friends,<sup>207</sup> so much so that some wonder whether the term bullying is even appropriate at all.<sup>208</sup> For example, if a group of students are playfully engaged in making derogatory comments about female classmates’ bodies, without realizing that one or many of them are in a process of questioning their gender or sexuality and are participating despite massive discomfort, it is not so clear for faculty or the students themselves to recognize if the behaviour requires intervention, and to what degree. Which students are most responsible for the bullying behaviour, which ones are the most negatively affected, and which ones are simply bystanders? The one who initiated the game, the one(s) being objectified (who may or may not be present), the ones who participate because of the pressure to perform masculinity correctly, or the ones who are internalizing sexist attitudes? Researchers argue that:

*a ‘bully’ is simply someone who is “making an ‘extreme investment’ in a cultural system that allows them to access power through the “normative regulation of others”. In other words, the violence termed “bullying” is merely the heightened and visible form of aggression that circulates everyday in schools and in the larger culture... these ‘normative cruelties’ are ‘exclusionary and injurious practices’ that are taken for granted as normal gendered behavior. ... social interactions such as girls’ gossiping, boys’ roughhousing, or “playful” exchanges of insults like “slut” and “fag” are rarely considered to be overtly aggressive behavior. Therefore, such low-level aggressions — which actively reproduce normative expectations for gender and sexuality — are rarely noticed, let alone monitored.*<sup>209</sup> (Pascoe, 2013, p.25)

For bullying to be more than simply managed, it needs to be understood within this context. Any anti-bullying policy must take into account how the act of bullying is a citation of *social attitudes* that, at their root, are based in ideologies that encourage students to police, or monitor, judge and influence each other’s behaviours along boundaries of sex, gender, ability, race, religion, etc., to ensure that these boundaries remain stable, that they are not transgressed. These ideologies do not simply enter the school environment through external sources, individual for each student (from media, individual home environments’, etc.), but may very well be expressed in and by the school environment itself.

<sup>204</sup> Elizabeth Payne & Melissa Smith. (2013). LGBTQ Kids, School Safety, and Missing the Big Picture: How the Dominant Bullying Discourse Prevents School Professionals from Thinking about Systemic Marginalization or ... Why We Need to Rethink LGBTQ Bullying. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 1-36. doi:10.14321/qed.0001

<sup>205</sup> Ibid

<sup>206</sup> Ibid

<sup>207</sup> C. J. Pascoe. (2013). Notes on a Sociology of Bullying: Young Men’s Homophobia as Gender Socialization. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 87-104. doi:10.14321/qed.0087

<sup>208</sup> Ibid

<sup>209</sup> Ibid

### 3.6.2.1 Recommendation

# Recommendation

It is recommended that the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence Policy, and Safe and Caring School Act be reviewed to include or approximate the following definition of bullying, parallel to the definition found in the Education Act:

*Bullying is overt verbal, physical, or technology-based (“cyber,” text messaging, etc.) aggression that is persistently focused on targeted person(s) over time. This behavior is visible aggression that has escalated from a larger system of low-level or covert normalized aggression that polices the boundaries between “normal” and “different” in a specific social context. Targeted person(s) are victimized because they are perceived to be outside the boundaries of “normal” as culturally defined within a peer group. This aggression is a tool for acquiring higher social status in a peer group because by targeting others as “different,” the aggressor claims a higher position in the social hierarchy and reinforces the social “rules” of acceptability. Peer-to-peer aggression typically replicates structural inequality, and therefore patterns of targeting are likely to reflect systemic marginalization along lines of gender, sex, sexuality, race, (dis)ability, and class. Bullying frequently reinforces gender norms —ideas about “correct” and “normal” masculinity and femininity. Students who were viewed as having non-normative gender (and by extension, sexuality) are frequent targets. Not all aggressive behaviors between students can be termed “bullying” — some are the result of individual conflict or personality differences.<sup>210</sup> (Payne, 2013, p.26)*

## 3.7 Bullying, sexuality and pedagogy

One of the most effective ways to disrupt these harmful ideologies is in the classroom. This section addresses what is known as the ‘hidden curriculum’, that is, gaps in student knowledge that is produced about ‘the other’ through indirect means;<sup>211</sup> choices made about what materials are provided for students in each classroom,<sup>212</sup> through generalizations, omissions and distortions about what is normal or universal about varied human experiences, and in generalizing about the ‘other’.<sup>213-214</sup> The result is that ‘the other’ is incorporated into the definition of normality, instead of being met on their own terms.<sup>215</sup> This ‘hidden curriculum’ can risk carrying more educational significance than the actual one.<sup>216</sup> For all students to feel valued in the school environment requires that faculty be aware of these forms of hidden knowledge and how general statements about gender, sex, sexuality, gender roles, gender expression and other topics can be biased.

<sup>210</sup> Elizabette Payne & Melissa Smith. (2013). LGBTQ Kids, School Safety, and Missing the Big Picture: How the Dominant Bullying Discourse Prevents School Professionals from Thinking about Systemic Marginalization or ... Why We Need to Rethink LGBTQ Bullying. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 1-36. doi:10.14321/qed.0001

<sup>211</sup> Kumashiro, K. (2000). Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53. doi:10.2307/1170593

<sup>212</sup> Clare, Bradford (2007). *Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press. 10.3366/E175561980800015X

<sup>213</sup> Kumashiro, K. (2000). Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53. doi:10.2307/1170593

<sup>214</sup> Moty K, Rhodes M. (2021). The Unintended Consequences of the Things We Say: What Generic Statements Communicate to Children About Unmentioned Categories. *Psychol Sci*. 32(2):189-203. doi: 10.1177/0956797620953132.

<sup>215</sup> Heringer, Rebecca (2020). Reconceptualizing Anti-Oppressive Education: A Lesson From the Other. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education* 15(2): pp. 57.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid

Employees of the LBPSB were consulted and emphasized the need for equity and diversity in teaching materials to complement the ministerial curriculum. They also emphasized the need for time and resources to accomplish certain tasks as part of these goals, such as changing library subject headings, increasing collaboration with each other, etc. While one impulse is to counter the gaps in a curriculum with *more knowledge*, trying to correct or replace one curriculum with another that may have fewer gaps, Kumashiro notes that these gaps are actually wonderful tools when used in paradoxical ways:

*Schools should not reject curriculum standards ..., schools should use standards in paradoxical ways, namely, by teaching students to reach them, but simultaneously supporting students in seeing where and how the standards have gaps, where they include and exclude certain perspectives and experiences, advance certain goals, privilege certain groups, and so on.*<sup>217</sup> (Kumashiro, 2009, p. xxv)

*A culturally relevant pedagogy cannot be a strategy that claims to be the solution for all people at all times, but rather, is a product or practice that is constantly being contested and redefined. ... I urge participation ... that constantly look to the margins to find students who are being missed and needs that have yet to be articulated. Educators should create safe spaces based on what they see is needed right now, but they should also constantly re-create the spaces by asking, whom does this space harm or exclude? They should create supportive programs, but should also constantly re-create the programs by asking, what practices does this program foreclose and make unthinkable? They should engage in equitable and relevant pedagogies, but should also constantly rethink their pedagogies by asking, whom does this pedagogy miss or silence? Without constantly complicating the very terms of "the Other," an education "for the Other" will not be able to address the ways it always and already misses some Others.*<sup>218</sup> (Kumashiro, 2000, p.31)

As one teacher told the TF:

*"It takes more than just conferences and occasional assemblies with guest speakers for students to learn about all the inequities and inequalities faced by our marginalized communities. ... We need to incorporate these topics into all subject-matters, create cross-curricular projects, and engage our students with thought-provoking and critical-thinking opportunities."*

Part of this work is to encourage all learners, students and faculty, to lean into discomfort, to allow space for the "productive tension" that is generated as learners resist and engage with knowledge that challenges common sense and is uncomfortable. Rather than try and banish this discomfort and work around it, researchers suggest that it is in this state of "crisis" that learners are most open to incorporating and internalizing new perspectives<sup>219</sup>, *if* space is prepared for the

<sup>217</sup> Kumashiro, K. (2009). *Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning Towards Social Justice*. Routledge, p.xxv.

<sup>218</sup> Kumashiro, K. (2000). Toward a Theory of Anti-Opressive Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53. doi:10.2307/1170593

<sup>219</sup> Staley, S., & Leonardi, B. (2016). Leaning In to Discomfort: Preparing Literacy Teachers for Gender and Sexual Diversity. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 51(2), 209-229. Retrieved May 19, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24889915>

uncomfortable and the unpredictable.<sup>220</sup> Creating and allowing space for students to critically engage with their discomfort, on their own terms, allows them to address these difficult topics in powerful, lasting ways. Researchers note that “teachers commonly turned a deaf ear to boys’ homophobic and sexist comments,” because “if a teacher were to address every offensive comment students uttered,” every comment from the ‘class clown,’ “very little learning would take place.”<sup>221</sup> (Pascoe, 2007, p.27) Students and parents told the TF in their letters of times where the mishandling of difficult topics in classrooms opened the door for harm, where the anxiety of confronting or subverting social norms turned into upsetting humour or the dismissal of valid concerns from students:

*“A white teacher would repeatedly read aloud Nigger while reading ... despite the uncomfortable position she had put the Black kids in her class. Towards the end of reading the book, she even went up to a Black student saying “so, can I say you’re my nigga?? and proceeded to laugh about it.”*

Although this comment may not have been directly related to sexuality, it underscores how harmful and anxiety-provoking incidents and teachers’ reactions to them can be for students.

Other strategies must be thought out to prevent these social anxieties from overwhelming students and educators. As one parent said in a letter, after their child was sent sexually explicit images from a classmate without their consent, school authorities told them that it was probably their daughter’s fault, that it was impossible it could have happened as she described, on a school email account:

*“She completely blamed the victim. I brought this higher up and nothing was done about it. ... I followed by writing a letter of complaint regarding the principal but it led to nothing. I was never advised that lbpsb had an official complaint process.”*

Sexual education, as well as other school courses, provide many opportunities for educators and school professionals to address issues relating to the sexual and emotional development of students as they are affected by the histories addressed in previous sections. Many of the gaps in the formal and informal sexual education curriculum are a result of the tendency to present the contemporary western gender binary as natural and universal, the categorization of bodies as normal or not,<sup>222</sup> as well as the histories noted above. Annex B contains an itemized list of these potential gaps ordered by their associated curricular competency.

<sup>220</sup> Heringer, Rebecca (2020). Reconceptualizing Anti-Oppressive Education: A Lesson From the Other. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education* 15(2): pp. 57. <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE>

<sup>221</sup> Pascoe, C.J. (2007). *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

<sup>222</sup> Dozono, T. (2017). Teaching Alternative and Indigenous Gender Systems in World History: A Queer Approach. *The History Teacher*, 50(3), 425-447. Retrieved May 19, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44507259>

### 3.7.1 Recommendation

## Recommendation

It is recommended that principals ensure collaboration between educators and other staff in the implementation of sexual education material with the use of the Planning Grid document, and that they commit to covering these gaps whenever possible across subjects.

### 3.7.2 Recommendation

It is recommended that school principals consider approving the integration of anti-oppressive teaching techniques as part of an anti-bullying and anti-violence plan.

### 3.7.3 Recommendation

It is recommended that principals encourage collaboration between educators in their coverage of anti-oppressive education, in a manner similar to the one facilitated by the Planning Grid document provided for in the sexual education documentation.

### 3.7.4 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Library Materials Selection Policy be amended to express a dedication to providing materials written by and centered on Black, Indigenous, non-Christian, non-western and (dis)abled people, as well as transgender, gender non-conforming, queer, and intersex people of these groups.

## 3.8 Professional development

In a similar vein, many faculty members have expressed a need for support in their professional development, so that they may be better informed and equipped to understand the lived experience of every student and the histories of the systems of oppression that continue to have effects in the school environment and beyond.

### 3.8.1 Recommendation

## Recommendation

The TF recommends that professional development for admin, non-teaching professionals, teachers and support staff cover such topics as Black and Indigenous queer feminism, Indigenous worldviews and understandings of gender and sexuality, the histories of queer and trans oppression and resistance in Canada, anti-oppressive teaching methods across various subjects, toxic and alternative masculinities, colonial and economic histories of sexuality, histories of policing and sex work, etc.



# Chapter 4 • Abilities



## Written by:

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## Glossary

**Neurodiversity:** describes conditions like ADHD, Autism, and Dyslexia; arguing diverse neurological conditions are the result of normal variations in the human genome and a social category such as sexual orientation and ethnicity.

**Neurodivergent Person:** An individual whose neurological development is atypical. Meaning they function outside what is considered typical, often applied to autistics.

**Neurotypical:** is used to describe a person whose neurological development and functioning are typical, and conform to what most people would perceive as typical.

### 4.0 Mandate of abilities subgroup

The Abilities subgroup will explore areas concerning advocacy, policies, neurodiversity, physical disabilities, mental health issues, classroom adaptation, teacher training, and well-being of adults. Through letters submitted to the members of the Task Force, the LBPSB community has shared their experiences, concerns, and suggestions in order to promote and sustain an equitable and inclusive environment for everyone. The Abilities subgroup members have also consulted, directly, various members of the LBPSB community in order to make recommendations, while taking into account the varied needs of this rich and diverse community.

### 4.1 Advocacy and neurodiversity

Special needs, neurodiversity and varied abilities is the reality of the classroom in an inclusive board such as the LBPSB. The student services department (SSD) published that in 2019-2020 1564 students in the LBPSB were considered special needs and 13% of all students have an individualised education plan, meaning adaptation have been made to meet their needs and finally 68% of LBPSB students with special needs in 2020 would be considered “neurodiverse,” as per the student services department. Based on these statistics the Task Force found the necessity to understand student needs, adapt the learning environment and execute consistent inclusive strategies of paramount importance. “Advocates of neurodiversity assert that neurological variation is central to the success of the human species”.<sup>223</sup> (p.12) The existing LBPSB special needs policies are generally comprehensive and progressive when it comes to neurodiverse students even though the school board policy for organization of services for students with special needs has not been revised since 2013. LBPSB has an inclusive philosophy that promotes a supportive academic and social-emotional environment for all students. What seems to be in question is their ability to follow through with their policies.

*“until this board can take their policies and turn them into sustainable action, it is just words on paper”*  
- Special Needs Parent

<sup>223</sup> McGee, M. (2012). Neurodiversity. *American Sociological Association*, 11:3, 12-13.



The implementation of the required support is a challenge due to several factors (i.e. governmental financial constraints, qualified workers, insufficient number of teachers and support staff). Despite the difficulties, the need to support the students and their families throughout their academic career is vital to their success. We know that neurodiverse students graduate at a much lower rate, only 40% of US students compared to their neurotypical peers (51%).<sup>224</sup>

Part of assuring the implementation of the current policies addressing special needs students at LBPSB is to include self representation from the special needs populations. Including neurodiverse individuals in the process can assure that the policies and procedures the LBPSB has in place are relevant, up-to-date and actionable. The correctness of terminology used when identifying students for example, does the student prefer identity first, or person first language - a similar process to gender identity explored in a separate subsection of this report. One of the impacts representative advocacy can have is the correctness of the language and symbols used in board policies and intervention planning and as mentioned considering the boards policies has not been updated since 2013 some of the vernacular and imagery is no longer appropriate: specifically looking towards terms such as:

- Neurotypical
- Neurodivergent
- Handicapped
- Neurodiverse
- Mental Health

Furthermore having representatives of our diverse community involved in the policy making process, including the students in their own process and encouraging self advocacy improves their chances of success. Individualized education plans (IEP) are an excellent way to foster self advocacy and access to the tools needed by each student. However, not every student with a disability has been given an IEP or is not directly involved in developing it with the professionals. This may produce stress and anxiety for students who may struggle with the given curriculum and may result in students not having access to the tools they need to succeed. The lack of clear and complete communication about what an IEP is and how its properly worded goals can work to a students benefit are lacking. The parent of a special needs child wrote in a letter:

*“I recall an IEP meeting with his second-grade teacher; one of the recommendations written in the document was that he was to “act age appropriately and remain in class”. We felt doomed.”*

The Task Force found that students, teachers and support staff need the tools necessary to advocate and eliminate stigmatizations attached to these children.

<sup>224</sup> Coghill, E. M. H. & Coghill, J. G. (2021). *Supporting Neurodiverse College Success: A Guide for Librarians, Student Support Services, and Academic Learning Environments*. Rowan & Littlefield.

### 4.1.1 Recommendations

# Recommendations

1. Review and update existing policies(e.g. Anti Bullying Anti Violence plan, Students with Special Needs policy), led by an interdisciplinary team (principal, teacher, non-teaching professional, support staff, student, parent) so as to adjust the nomenclature in order to ensure diversity, inclusion and equity are respected and promoted;
2. Strengthen the IEP process (youth, adult, and vocational sectors) not only by adapting written documentation but also ensure multidisciplinary meeting takes pace;
3. Ensure that updated symbols representing the diversity of all LBPSB students are used on all communications;
4. Provide regularly updated information to all employees on the current terms to be respectfully used when referring to students with varied abilities;
5. Mandate the School Board to make recommendations to the provincial government to change the language used in their documents (e.g. handicapped, handicap attendant);
6. Ask students explicitly what term they want to be identified with;
7. Consult with self-advocacy groups (e.g. The Montreal Autism. Centre, Lethbridge-Leyton-Mackay Rehabilitation center) to ensure students' needs are accurately represented;
8. Sustain and prolong continued partnerships with community partners in order to work more collaboratively;
9. Ensure students with varied abilities are represented positively in the work or literature presented in the classroom.

## 4.2 Physical disability and adaptations

According to section 235 of the Education Act; “all students, regardless of disability or special needs, and that both teaching methods and curriculum should be adapted for the handicapped or otherwise challenged student.” Essentially all students have the right to access curricula in an environment which meets their learning needs. According to Hartman, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework is fundamental in providing students with meaningful learning opportunities; “...it also helps teachers to design and implement curriculum that supports all learners from the start, including those with different abilities, needs or background”.<sup>225</sup>(p.57) Furthermore, Hartmann states that “When teachers embrace the conceptual shift of the UDL framework and learner variability, they understand that severe disabilities are part of the natural diversity that is to be expected and embraced in classrooms.”<sup>226</sup>(p.58)

<sup>225</sup> Hartmann, E. (2015). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Learners with Severe Support Needs. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 11:1, 54-67.

<sup>226</sup> Hartmann, E. (2015). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Learners with Severe Support Needs. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 11:1, 54-67.

According to Fullen & Lanfworthy, “our goals for education and learning, is to include skills that prepare all learners to be life-long creative, connected and collaborative problem solvers and to be healthy, happy individuals who contribute to the common good in today’s globally interdependent world.”<sup>227</sup>(p. 21) According to the LBPSB Success Plan, student engagement has been identified as one of the Board’s core values. This innovative framework has been adopted by the school board as the vessel to promote engagement in all students to support academic achievement; “LBPSB’s long-term investment in the Deep Learning framework allows our students to engage with all aspects of the self and the community at the highest level.”<sup>228</sup>(p. 4)

Burke states, “the process of inclusion in any environment is about making the environment fit the child, regardless of their abilities, rather than expecting the child to fit into the existing environment.”<sup>229</sup>(p.84) Recess, lunch and other unstructured time provide valuable opportunities for students to practice important skills beyond academics. “Play is essential to children’s mastery of physical, social, and risk management skills, and the physical environment has the potential to either reinforce or hinder acquisition of these skills.”<sup>230</sup>(p.1)

According to the Canadian Public Health Association, research suggests that some features of a play area can marginalize those who are less physically able, and that it is common for children with varying physical abilities to find that they are unable to access or use the majority of play equipment and its features.

According to Burke, “For the children with physical impairments, playgrounds provide limited accessibility, usability, and do not support interaction with peers.”<sup>231</sup>(p.87) For the health and development of students with physical disabilities, it is essential that LBPSB schools ensure that all play areas and/ or play structures are inclusive and accessible to all students.

According to the following LBPSB document: *Students with Special Needs: Policy on the organization of services, the mission statement is aligned with both the Education Act and the UDL framework stating:* “LBPSB works with its community to provide a healthy, safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment in which there is flexibility for all students to reach their full potential.”<sup>232</sup>(p. 3) Research indicates that flexible seating in classrooms or learning spaces is a positive approach in fostering environments conducive for all learners. “Flexible seating is implemented in mind with the overall goal that students select workspaces suited to their needs as a learning experience in order for them to be as successful as possible.”<sup>233</sup>(p.2)

<sup>227</sup> Fullen, M., & Langworthy, M. (2013). Towards a New End: New Pedagogies for Deep Learning. *Collaborative Impact*, 1, 1-37.

<sup>228</sup> LBPSB. (2017). *LBPSB’s Student Success Summary*. [https://boardsite.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/SSS\\_2018\\_1.pdf](https://boardsite.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/SSS_2018_1.pdf)

<sup>229</sup> Burke, J. (2013). Just for the Fun of it: Making Playgrounds Inclusive to all Children. *World Leisure Journal*, 1, 83-95.

<sup>230</sup> Accessibility and Usability of Play spaces. *Canadian Public Health Association*, 1, 1-4.  
[https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/resources/play/play\\_accessibility\\_summary\\_e.pdf](https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/resources/play/play_accessibility_summary_e.pdf)

<sup>231</sup> Burke, J. (2013). Just for the Fun of it: Making Playgrounds Inclusive to all Children. *World Leisure Journal*, 1, 83-95.

<sup>232</sup> LBPSB. (2013, September, 6) *Students with Special Needs: Policy on the Organization*.

[http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Council/docs/policies/Special\\_Needs\\_Policy\\_3\\_5\\_sept2013.pdf](http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Council/docs/policies/Special_Needs_Policy_3_5_sept2013.pdf)

<sup>233</sup> (2021). Flexible Seating Impact on Classroom Environment. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 20:2, 1-10.

The LBPSB Special Needs Policy and Success Plan indicate forward thinking approaches, frameworks and strategies to support all students. Concerns have been raised with regards to the lack of consistency and accountability with regards to the implementation of an inclusive framework to foster learning environments where all students can reach their academic potential.

*“Until this board can take their policies and turn them into sustainable action, it is just words on paper.”*  
- Special Needs Parent

#### 4.2.1 Recommendations

## Recommendations

1. Enhance and support activities with appropriate adaptations and keep in consideration the needs and abilities of all students such as smaller ratios, adapted transportation etc.(e.g. field trips, sports clubs, yearbook, etc.);
2. Verify that all play areas and structure designs are inclusive and accessible as per the Canadian Public Health Association-Accessibility and Usability Play Spaces standards;
3. Make certain the capital projects include classroom adaptations for all learners aligned with the UDL Framework;
4. Ensure all students and staff have equal physical access to the facilities (e.g. wheelchair ramps, lifts, bathrooms, libraries, science labs, sports equipment, etc.). Funding for such renovations may be a concern, in which case, the LBPSB must engage the Ministry of Education to secure funding;
5. Provide furniture such as chairs and desks that are adaptable according to the physical particularities of all students.

### 4.3 Mental health and well-being

Well-being can commonly be described as the state in which an individual feels happiness, health, and good life satisfaction. Hetan Shah and Nic Marks in 2004 state that “Well-being is more than just happiness. As well as feeling satisfied and happy, well-being means developing as a person, being fulfilled, and making a contribution to the community.”<sup>234</sup> (p.4)

Aristotle in the third century B.C. came up with the concept of eudaimonia, which means the contented state of feeling healthy, happy and prosperous. More recently, well-being is referred to as one’s perception of overall positive functioning including how we relate with others, attitudes towards one’s self, as well as a person’s sense of mastery and personal growth.<sup>235</sup>

<sup>234</sup> Shah, H., & Marks, N. (2004). A Well-Being Manifesto for a Flourishing Society. *New Economics Foundation*, 1, 1-24.

<sup>235</sup> Burns R. (2016) Psychosocial Well-being. In: Pachana N. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Geropsychology*. Springer, Singapore, pp.1.

The concept of well-being can be considered subjective, as it is often dependent on several interrelated factors such as environment, personal goals, abilities, and access to resources to name a few. In fact, research has established a direct negative association between poor levels of mental health and educational outcomes.<sup>236</sup> Students who experience adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, parental separation or divorce, or household mental illness have a profound impact on brain development and long lasting impacts on a person's health and overall functioning. The impact of ACE's do not go away on their own. Providing the opportunity for students to learn how to express themselves by putting the appropriate words to their feelings and to understand how their emotions affect their thoughts and behaviours is paramount to their development. Conjointly, engaging in mentally healthy activities such as art, exercise, music, as well as the development of skill sets that are transferable in adult life helps to build personal resilience and overcome adversity. The school setting can become a protective factor for the overall wellness of students. Support provided from the school and the community play an integral role in mitigating the effects of such challenges.<sup>237</sup>

When a safe, caring, and healthy school climate is present, both students and educators alike can grow and flourish academically and emotionally. Furthermore, a positive school climate fosters supportive relationships, engagement, safety, cultural competence, cultural responsiveness, and high expectations.<sup>238</sup> The child/parent/school alliance can also be strengthened when a healthy and trusting environment is present.

Consequently, a positive working environment for all staff members in both the youth and adult sector proves to be of significant importance, as is expressed in letters sent to the Task Force:

*Don't get me wrong, I have had great administrators, and I really am very good at my work and have come across some wonderful people at the board... The teachers here are a great bunch, but this part of work is really hard on my mental health."*

*- LBPSB Support Staff*

Similarly, students, parents, and staff expressed a need to maintain safe environments, to be heard and listened to compassionately and confidentially when faced with a situation of injustice or inequality. More specifically, it was suggested in a letter addressed to the Task Force that the school board provide targeted support in the area of bullying and violence prevention:

*"Institute annual mandatory ABAV training sessions with administrators, teachers, support staff, and daycare staff. These training sessions should include specific guidelines on how employees can recognize and actively counteract gender-identity based harassment, as well as sexual harassment, racism and ableism, and thereby help create and maintain a welcoming, safe space for all students."*

*- LBPSB Parent*

<sup>236</sup> Corgnalia, F., Crivellaro, E., & McNally, S. (2015). Mental Health and Education Decisions. *Labour Economics*, 33, 1-12.

<sup>237</sup> Rossen, E. & Cowan, K. C. (2015). Improving Mental Health in Schools. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 96:4, 8-13.

<sup>238</sup> Osher, D. & Berg, J. (2018). School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning: The Integration of Two Approaches. *Penn State University*, 1, 1-14.

By the same token, data from the OurSchool Survey<sup>239</sup> conducted in 2019 and again in 2021 concluded that most students in both elementary and high schools report feeling excluded by their peers most often due to their appearance, or academic abilities. As mentioned above, establishing and explicitly maintaining safe and confidential ways to express their concerns remains a necessity for all concerned.

In addition, experiencing success in a school setting has been proven to be a protective factor in the wellbeing of students, allowing the optimal development of key personal competencies such as resilience, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Furthermore, success can be defined by various measures that go beyond academic functioning. As indicated in the LBPSB Commitment to Success report for 2018-2022, the board goal is to “...teaching for learning rather than for the exams.”<sup>240</sup> (p.3)

The LBPSB identifies engagement, achievement, and wellness as the main pillars in which success can be measured. In this optic, all learners, despite their diverse levels of abilities, can have an equal opportunity to thrive as a student. Giving equal importance to academic achievement and personal growth ensures our students not only can flourish as successful students, but also as successful members of society. As stated by a letter sent to the Task Force, support in this area continues to be a preoccupation, not only for parents, but staff members alike:

*“I work for the school board and am incredibly frustrated and upset with the lack of resources and services available to help these children thrive”.*

*- Special Needs Parent*

Hence, establishing and supporting school success teams, composed of staff members from different disciplines (e.g. principal, teacher, non-teaching professional, support staff) in both the youth and adult sectors can help to promote the planning, implementation, and evaluation of actions put in place to ensure the well-being of all students.

#### 4.4 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

As an integral part of human development, social and emotional learning (SEL) is a key ingredient that influences achievement, wellbeing, and engagement for all stakeholders. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.<sup>241</sup> When school personnel understand the underpinnings of SEL and are adequately supported in its application within the classroom settings, the benefits in both school and after-school settings are evident. Studies have shown that student academic achievement increases, behavioural issues decrease, and students feel less emotional distress.<sup>242</sup>

<sup>239</sup> The Learning Bar (Accessed May 23, 2021). *Together we Transform Lives: Give all the Children the Opportunity to Thrive*. <https://thelearningbar.com/>

<sup>240</sup> LBPSB (2018). *Commitment to Success Report*, 1, 1-14.

[http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Commitment\\_to\\_Success\\_2018-2022.pdf](http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Commitment_to_Success_2018-2022.pdf)

<sup>241</sup> CASEL (2020, December). *What is SEL?* <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>.

<sup>242</sup> Payton, J., Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. B., Schellinger, K. B., & Pachan, M. (2008). The Positive Impact of Social and Emotional Learning for Kindergarten and Eighth -Grade Students. *Casel*, 1, 1-12.



As mentioned by Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, teacher well-being is contagious; stressed-out teachers tend to have stressed-out students. Conversely, improving adult SEL competencies, and providing support in this area impacts the perception of self-efficacy and overall well-being.<sup>243</sup>

Furthermore, explicitly addressing issues related to personal biases, equity, diversity and inclusion through SEL has a significant impact on the overall well-being of all students. Placing an emphasis on the development of SEL not only in students but staff and parents alike, can lead to the promotion of equitable learning environments. Teachers who infuse SEL within their curriculum tend to have lower rates of burnout, feel more satisfied with work, and are better able to manage their own stress.<sup>244</sup>

By the same token, the integration of multi-tiered interventions and prevention measures related to mental health and SEL education within the existing school context improves the chances these measures will be durable and sustained over time. An ecological approach to mental health and SEL education where the focus is on the person who is learning rather than on the subject matter can lead to a more robust transfer of knowledge, and support the sustained implementation of the intervention and prevention measures put in place.

#### 4.4.1 Recommendations

## Recommendations

1. Guarantee all schools and centres have a designated 'safe space' to allow students and staff alike to feel welcomed, take risks, and encourage self-expression. This space can be either physical or virtual, and supported by staff trained in the area of mental health;<sup>245</sup>
2. Encourage the creation of outdoor classrooms and/or wellness areas for both staff and students in youth and adult sectors;<sup>246</sup>
3. Support the explicit teaching of social and emotional learning (SEL) school-wide, class-wide, and on an individual basis for all students in both the youth and adult sectors;
4. Provide opportunities for all staff members to better understand how their own social and emotional skills have an impact on student success.
5. Offer yearly training sessions related to the elaboration and application of the ABAV plans in order to support all those faced with acts of bullying and violence as well as to equip staff members having to intervene in those instances.

<sup>243</sup> Schonert-Reichl, K. A. Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers. *The Future of Children*, 27:1. 137-155.

<sup>244</sup> CASEL. (2020, October). *Centering Equity Requires All of Us*. <https://casel.org/centering-equity-requires-all-of-us/>.

<sup>245</sup> Anonymous. (2020). Bame Awarding Gap Project: Staff Toolkit 2020. *University College London (UCL)*, 1, 1-54.

<sup>246</sup> Acar, H. (2014). Learning Environments for Children in Outdoor Spaces. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 141, 846-853.

#### 4.4.1 Recommendations (continued)

# Recommendations

6. Continue to disseminate information and resources related to mental health and wellness, such as the postcards created by the Centre of Excellence for Mental Health;<sup>247</sup>
7. Additionally, extend the dissemination of the information to students through the creation of a student wellness committee overseen by mental health professionals in the Student Services Department (SSD);
8. Encourage schools and centres to measure student success according to the three categories outlined by the school board in their annual report: achievement, wellness and engagement;
9. Offer support from SSD professionals for School Success Teams in their planning, implementation, and evaluation process of actions taken to support a positive school climate;
10. Promote programs and initiatives which support all students, regardless of their level of ability, in the adoption of healthy lifestyles.

## 4.5 Staff training and professional development

Working in the education system can be a rewarding experience for many. For the most part, the sense of making a difference in the lives of students, to inspire, and to foster personal growth are some of the more notable reasons expressed by educators. Furthermore, the learning process is a never-ending endeavour and necessary for the development of one's personal skill set. Contrarily, when not enough supports are put in place to support staff members in their own learning of new skills, policies, and strategies to foster student learning, disengagement and anxiety can take over. As seen in a 2015 survey conducted by the Interuniversity Research Centre has shown that almost 25 percent of Quebec public school teachers quit within their first five years.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>247</sup> LBPSB. (2021). *Centre of Excellence for Mental Health*. <https://cemh.lbpsb.qc.ca/>

<sup>248</sup> Sirois, G. (2020). Rapport Préliminaire: Estimation des Besoins d'enseignants et Données du Sondage. *Gouvernement du Québec*, 1, 1-69.

Mitigating the effects of challenging situations faced by all school staff members has never been more critical. As achievement, wellness, and engagement are the integral components of success at LBPSB, providing its staff members with the knowledge and tools required to ensure all students have a positive experience at school is essential. Providing opportunities for staff members to better understand the needs of their students, to acquire new skills and update their knowledge, and strengthen their practice and their effectiveness can ensure better opportunities to foster equitable environments for all learners.

*“I believe the educators and integration aides need more professional development in areas recognizing the underlying issues behind behaviors connected with ADHD and anxiety, as well as its implementation.”*  
- Special Needs Parent

Building on this concept, the proper planning of professional development (PD) is of the utmost importance in order to ensure the transfer of knowledge to skills. According to Dr. Thomas R. Guskey, the intentional planning and selection of targeted PD opportunities is not always apparent. Aligning actions to goals while sustaining support measures to evaluate the impact of set goals ensures the success of such interventions.<sup>249</sup>

Additionally, offering a wide array of PD opportunities is becoming more obvious, not only for teachers, but also for non-teaching professional and support staff (e.g. integration aides, lunch and daycare personnel, administrative assistants), in both the youth and adult sectors.

*“During a parent-teacher meeting, his teacher stated that she had been a teacher for 20 years and her methods work for most of the class, and that she was not going to change anything for just one student.”*  
- Special Needs Parent

As diverse learners, it is a well established notion that we all learn in different ways. Hence, moving away from the one-and-done models such as workshops and conferences might help to accentuate the transfer of knowledge into practice.<sup>250</sup>

In essence, one-and-done PD sessions seems to have a limited impact on one's improvement of skills. Conversely, ongoing coaching and peer mentoring has proven to not only have a significant impact on the application of knowledge, but also on the perception of personal self-efficacy. Providing dedicated time for staff to support each other, to implement a collaborative approach to teaching and planning of interventions, to plan actions by using data driven decisions, and sharing of best practices are some of the essential measures that need to be more present in the educational system.<sup>251</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Guskey, T. R., & Suk Yoon, K. (2009). What Works in Professional Development? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90:7, 495-500.

<sup>250</sup> TNTP. (2015). The Mirage: Confronting the Hard Truth About Our Quest for Teacher Development. *TNTP*, 1, 1-58.

<sup>251</sup> Bruce, J., & Showers, B. (2002). Student Achievement Through Staff Development. *National College for School Leadership*, 1, 1-5.

### 4.5.1 Recommendations

# Recommendations

1. Support the development of skills, positive attitude changes, and transfer of knowledge into practice through professional development opportunities for all regular and replacement staff (e.g. principals, teachers, professionals, administrative assistants, custodians, daycare and lunch personnel, integration aides, newly hired staff, etc.);
2. Offer support to school personnel in the transfer of knowledge to skills via the collaborative approach and rely on data driven decisions in order to sustain improvement through the application of the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle;<sup>252</sup>
3. Intentionally provide scheduled and targeted professional development opportunities and subsequent mentoring for staff members (e.g. secretaries, lunch/student supervisors, daycare educators) who are often excluded from training opportunities due to their work hours;
4. Provide intentional and explicit awareness of the resources and current information available on the public LBPSB web page and on the staff LBPSB Single Sign On System (SSO);
5. Provide professional development and subsequent accompaniment in the area of expressed concern such as mental health, SEL, EDI, UDL, deep learning, trauma informed pedagogical practices & strategies (TIPPS).

<sup>252</sup> AMI. (2021). *Introduction to PDSA's*. [Video]. Youtube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHPFt3i\\_Ke0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHPFt3i_Ke0)

# Chapter 5 • Race and Ethnicities



## Written by:

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## 5.0 Introduction

The fifth chapter of this report is focused on exploring and highlighting the Eurocentric biases (a bias which favours views based on European-type ideals over those of non-Western civilizations) present in the institutions and schools in the LBPSB. The Task Force (TF) researched the issues and consequences that these biases have on our students and staff. Although these biases are sometimes subconscious and inherent, they can still have negative effects on the quality of learning and development of self worth and identity. These Eurocentric biases have been linked to stigmatization and stereotyping of certain populations considered living 'below the line'. That is to say, an imaginary horizontal line determining who is privileged and entitled (above the line) and those who are deemed to be subordinate (below the line). We looked to explore these biases and how they affect student and staff populations who, through racial and ethnic definition do not fit into the prescribed mold defined by predominant social norms. Understanding the vast diversity of our student and staff populations is crucial. Certain differences and lifestyles that come out of these culturally diverse populations can be negatively perceived because of the aforementioned Eurocentric biases. Although the chapter focuses heavily on Black, Indigenous and South Asian populations, it is understood and accepted that any race or ethnicity that is not aligned with the hegemonic colonial ideology will face similar issues of stereotyping and stigmatization. By highlighting the issues faced with black and Indigenous populations we hope to offer an inclusive perspective demonstrating that these issues are faced by all Black, Indigenous, South Asian and people of color (BIPOC) populations in their own respective ways.

## 5.1 Compulsory policy/document for anti-racism that is standardized

The immediate issue our group encountered was not only the lack of an anti racism policy but also the lack of documentation that is necessary to evaluate the practicality and efficiency of policies in other areas. Successful anti-racism education and documentation initiatives must be "embedded in a district policy".<sup>253</sup> Through our research we have noticed large discrepancies in the already implemented Anti-Violence and Anti-Bullying (AVAB) in its lack of cohesion across all institutions. Each institution is charged with implementing their own version of the policy which can be found on the respected institutions website. Although foundationally sound at its core, we see the discretion involved in the interpretation and implementation of the policy of individual schools to be problematic as it contradicts the successful nature of standardized implementation. We also notice a lack of appropriate language that would give strength and reinforcement to the awareness of racism. This reinforcement would allow a concrete stance on the reality that racist interactions and aggressions happen between student to student, student to staff, staff to student and staff to staff. Throughout the meetings of the Task Force it became obvious that there were gaps in the regulation and emphasis on sections in the policy that handled racism. In reality such a defined section does not currently exist.

<sup>253</sup> Centre for Race and Culture. (2013, May). Anti-Racism Education in Canada: Best Practices. Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund.

### **5.1.1 Recommendations regarding standardized policy/document for anti-racism**

1. An extensive review of all circulating policies and documents in order to update them;
2. Implement in each of the policies and documentations a clearly defined section that specifically addresses racist and ethnic related incidences.<sup>254</sup>

## **5.2 Mandatory documentation and submissions of all cases related to racism**

Education is developed and steeped in unintentional bias because of historical institutional practices, allowing these incidents to go undocumented and to perpetuate.

### **5.2.1 Recommendations regarding the implementation of tasks or goals to judge practicability and success rate of policies**

1. Define labels within the AVAB given to situation or interactions. These do not have to be strict guidelines or criteria but must fit into a fluid category.
2. Define protocols or many different protocols outlined in the updated AVAB. We understand the lack of precedence in applying definitions to protocols. We have included a comprehensive guide to anti-racist policies and their defined criterias. We suggest using the document as a framework in developing these policies.<sup>255</sup>

## **5.3 Mandatory training and professional development**

Section 4.3 of our chapter looks to recognize the biases present within staff and students that can lead to issues that will harm the mental health and stunt the promotion of identity for all students, especially those marginalized.

An incident occurred at a LBPSB institution which highlighted the need for mandatory professional development and education for faculty members. In March 2021 during an anti-racism presentation regarding the use of the “n-word” a premeditated sabotage occurred. A faculty member outside of school infiltrated the Zoom meeting and attempted to downplay and shift the focus of the presentation. We have received numerous community letters highlighting the incident:

<sup>254</sup> Centre of Race and Culture, Anti-Racism Education in Canada: Best Practices, 2013, pp. 22.

<sup>255</sup> <https://education.uconn.edu/2020/09/22/reducing-racism-in-schools-the-promise-of-anti-racist-policies/#> This policy can be used as a framework for the development and improvement of policies.



*“My daughter reported a situation that occurred today during a discussion on racism, specifically the historic context of the ‘n’ word, and why it should not be used. My 2 daughters are one of few Black students in the school. Although I have stayed somewhat quiet on these matters as I feel my children need to learn to cope and address these issues as they get older (as I did), however I feel it is time to speak up.”*<sup>256</sup>

For those marginalized, witnessing such an incident is very problematic as it continues to perpetuate Eurocentric ideas that look to keep these populations oppressed. Another excerpt from a community letter illustrates the damage that this incident had:

*“The presenter insulted, stopped the presentation and stated he would be complaining to the board. Many of the students wrote to the presenter on the chat telling him that they did not feel like that. Some students came out of it terrified.”*<sup>257</sup>

We believe that through professional development and staff training this incident might have been avoided if this individual had been properly educated and informed on Eurocentric biases.

#### **5.4 Constitutional right of Indigenous identity and overview of issues faced by marginalized populations**

In our research we noticed that the current wave of anti-racist narratives are lacking in their emphasis on Indigenous communities. Eve Tuck and K.W. Yang’s article *Decolonization is not a metaphor* illustrates the gaps that have been seen in the neglect of Indigenous communities being included in the narrative.<sup>258</sup> A letter the Task Force received from the community illustrates these issues all too well.<sup>259</sup> In this letter an Inuit mother describes the reality that her children had to endure as a result of Eurocentric biases from other students and a lack of professional training on the part of staff members.

*“As you may know, education in the north is not up to par with “southern standards”. My daughter once told me that when one of her teachers found how behind she was, she blurted out in front of her classmates that “she should have learned this in grade 3!”*

This anecdotal evidence shows the gaps in staff members’ understanding of different cultural factors that affect how different groups and communities learn. Education should only be compared to identify gaps and assist the student - not to humiliate them. A student (especially one marginalized) should not have more attention drawn to them by an educator who is supposed to promote the classroom as a safe space for all students. In this statement on the part of the educator it resulted in a target being put on the back of this young person.

*“In high school, she has also felt to be singled out in class by a teacher on many occasions for what she feels is unnecessary. In turn, her classmates have asked many a question about issues that she isn’t educated in.”*

<sup>256</sup> Correspondence to The Lester B. Pearson School Board and the Task Force

<sup>257</sup> Correspondence to The Lester B. Pearson School Board and the Task Force

<sup>258</sup> Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is Not a Metaphor. *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1-4, pp. 3.

<sup>259</sup> Correspondence to The Lester B. Pearson School Board and the Task Force

“‘Othering’ a culture in this way established the colonisers’ cultures and worldview as normal and natural.”<sup>260</sup>

This student was ‘othered’ by the educator and this in turn allowed the students in the classroom to feel that it was a normal and natural way to treat those different from them. This is very problematic because it continues the cycle of recognizing one culture and its social norms as being superior to others. Thus, perpetuating the dominance of one culture over all others, as a result of a contextual history.

Further building on the anecdotal evidence, the following excerpt shows how professional bias can cause Indigenous communities to feel marginalized when grouped together as one generic group. In the same letter we see the following example of a young Inuit student’s experience:

*“[The young student...] was asked to partake in a ceremony about Montreal being on unceded territory. He was given a hand drum to help a pow-wow dancer with the ceremony. He was proud and so was I because he was brave to do so. My only concern is that if educated well enough in the different Indigenous people of Canada, he would not have helped the dancer in that fashion. I had offered to give him my Inuit drum and make him a traditional garment and was told that it was ok, they had a drum.”*

What began as a feeling of pride for this young student quickly devolved into despair for him and his family. Upon the mothers’ suggestion of a more representative garment and instrument, it was quickly shut down because “they already had a drum for the student”. This is very concerning because it shows the lack of effort and awareness to appreciate the differences between Indigenous cultures.

Important to mention is issues faced by our Latino and Canadian-Latino populations. Latino immigrants and children of immigrant parents face stereotypes and stigmatizations that are harmful to their expression of self-identity.<sup>261</sup> Research has shown that Latino immigrants will face harsher scrutiny in job applications even though they have the academic criterias and qualifications. This is illustrated in this quote from an excerpt in Muñoz (2016) article *“There’s no Racism in Canada, but...”*. *The Canadian Experience and Labor Integration of the Mexican Creative Class in Toronto*.<sup>262</sup>

<sup>260</sup> MacNaughton, G., & Davis, K. (2001). Beyond “Othering:” Rethinking Approaches to Teaching Young Anglo-Australian Children About Indigenous Australians. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 2(1), 83–93. <https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2001.2.1.10>, pp. 87.

<sup>261</sup> <https://newcanadianmedia.ca/its-not-on-me-its-on-you/> This article from 2020 shows the reality of racism faced by Canadian Latinos

<sup>262</sup> “You hear there’s work in Canada and that they need doctors and engineers, but when you get there, you find out that they consider a [bachelor’s] degree in engineering here like you were a technician or a mechanic. So then you can’t find a job, and you don’t know what to do before you go to authenticate your studies. I wouldn’t know if this is to attract qualified people and give them low-level jobs so they can then climb up the ladder instead of bringing in immigrants who are going to stay forever at the same social level, usually a low one. It might be that, or it might just be inefficiency in that they don’t announce the authentication processes in Canada”.

# Recommendations

## 5.4.1 Recommendations for professional development regarding Indigenous cultures and other marginalized populations

1. Formal professional training for staff members that describe the law founded right that Indigenous communities have to develop “culturally appropriate early childhood education programs”;<sup>263</sup>
2. When reaching out to Indigenous students we recommend emphasized care and understanding that a difference in educational practices does not constitute a lack of intelligence but is a right for Indigenous students;
3. When interacting with Indigenous students we recommend effort to deeply understand the differences in Indigenous communities/cultures and that not “one size fits all”;<sup>264</sup>
4. Using the framework for Indigenous culture, we recommend applying a similar approach with emphasis on sensitivity and understanding towards all marginalized populations. (Indigneous, Black, South Asian, Latino and POC)

## 5.5 Overview of issues faced by Black communities

Black communities have been stereotyped and stigmatized since the establishment of colonial powers in the 17th century. In order to debunk the myth that these labels and stigmatizations are a more modern and contemporary issue, it is important to understand a brief history of these stigmatizations and stereotypes.

The first instance of the construction of Black stigmatizations and stereotypes can be traced back to the 1600s.<sup>265•266</sup>

Issues regarding the construction of these stereotypes and stigmatizations can be seen in the classrooms and educational institutions, as outlined in *"The Meaning of Motherhood In Black Culture and Black Mother Daughter Relationships."*<sup>267</sup>

<sup>263</sup> Poirier, J., & Hedaraly, S. (2019–2020). Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action across Intergovernmental Landscapes: Who Can and Should do What? *Review of Constitutional Studies*, 24, 177-206. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/revicos24&div=14&id=&page=>, pp. 199

<sup>264</sup> Note: Action No. 14 include s specific component on the realities of Indigenous peoples, to continually inform the public about racism and discrimination experienced by First Nations and Inuit people. (p. 33). Action No. 16 Make the history and current realities of indigenous people in Quebec a mandatory part of initial teacher training programs (p. 34). <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dXXrfP7iFItBot2zxb8mXQsICLI1iF73YC6uzZrtsH4/edit> RA Groupe Action Contre Racisme LETTER PRESENTED TO PREMIER December 2020

<sup>265</sup> ‘Climate theory’ was “scientifically” understood and accepted that darker skin meant aggressive, hypersexual behavior. A second instance which solidified the stereotype into the colonial institutional mindset was a short story published in 1668 in an official British document. The short story *Isles of Pines* portrayed stereotypes of African women as hypersexual, aggressive, lustful, imposing.

<sup>266</sup> *Historical Evidence of Stereotypes/Stigmatization Construction for African Americans/Black Communities in Western Society* (2016) “Stamped from The Beginning” by Ibram X. Kendi

<sup>267</sup> Hill Collins, P. (1987). *The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Culture and Black mother/Daughter Relationships*. Sage, 4(2), 3-7.

We see how a traditional African kinship structure which is present in many black communities can be open to negative stigmatizations. The “multimother” kinship structure has many different guardians for black youth like aunts/cousins/grandparents/sisters and evidence shows these systems are efficient and complex. The stereotypes can be illustrated in two circumstances as highlighted in the abovementioned citation:

- 1. When mothers are protesting/addressing concerns with school administration**
  - a. White mothers: seen as good parent, strong, caring and concerned;
  - b. Black mothers: seen as hyper aggressive, potentially violent, hysterical.
- 2. Perspectives between representation at meetings like parent-teacher interviews**
  - a. When a black family shows up to a school meeting and frequently has changing representations of guardianship, such as someone other than the parent representing the student: This is often seen as disorganized and not following the Eurocentric concept of accepted kinship structures.

To illustrate the issues faced by Black communities in Canada in contemporary society, it is important to understand the realities that are often overlooked and dismissed by educators, among others.

A common theme associated with Black populations, and other minorities in Canada, is that they do not face similar systemic racism such as in countries like America.<sup>268</sup>

### **5.5.1 Reality of anti-Black racism in Canada**

The BCG study<sup>269</sup> revealed that:

- Black students are four times more likely to be expelled from a Toronto school than White students;
- Black students face much harsher assessment bias from teachers;
- 2 times fewer “excellent” ratings for black students despite similar standardized test scores;
- Almost half (48%) of Black students will be expelled in their academic career compared to 18% of White students;
- Black students are 2.5 times more likely than White students to be streamed into non-academic “applied programs”.

<sup>268</sup> Note: DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE: CANADA IS NOT A NATION OF CULTURAL TOLERANCE article by CHARLES OFFICER.  
[https://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/m\\_blog/dont-believe-the-hype-canada-is-not-a-nation-of-cultural-tolerance](https://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/m_blog/dont-believe-the-hype-canada-is-not-a-nation-of-cultural-tolerance)

<sup>269</sup> The article released in December 2020 by the (Boston Consulting Group, an international expert leader in a range of perspectives that questions the status quo and sparks change) revealed the truth about anti-black racism in Canada.  
[https://www.bcg.com/en-ca/publications/2020/reality-of-anti-black-racism-in-canada?fbclid=IwAR3SKKvZILtsgA3C0CL-YrREoUsY7KkKeeNSVFOeyq3pg-eZPeTfomtK4\\_k](https://www.bcg.com/en-ca/publications/2020/reality-of-anti-black-racism-in-canada?fbclid=IwAR3SKKvZILtsgA3C0CL-YrREoUsY7KkKeeNSVFOeyq3pg-eZPeTfomtK4_k)

## 5.6 Overview of issues faced by South Asian ethnic communities

On June 6th 2021, a terrible attack and murder of a family, originally from Pakistan, in London, Ontario occurred. Four of the five family members were murdered in a premeditated hate crime. It is vital to illustrate the uncertainty and fear that South Asian populations in Canada are experiencing. An exceptional sensitivity and empathy is necessary on behalf of LBPSB institutions to make their South Asian students and communities feel safe, welcomed and appreciated. In order to understand the impact that Eurocentric biases have on South Asian communities and those who represent Muslim ethnicity we want to illustrate the anecdotal evidence we have received from the community:

*"[...] there was a bomb threat called in at John Rennie. The entire school was evacuated to the Pointe-Claire arena down the street. Once there, a bunch of us were standing around. This was grade 11. Most of us in that group were South Asian, and Muslim. He knew that. He [the teacher] walked up to us and said, "So where did you Muslims plant the bomb this time?"*

This excerpt shows an issue that has multiple layers. It shows the continued Eurocentric bias on behalf of some educators and shows how the lack of education, destructive comments, and statements that perpetuate the stereotypes, affects the individual's sense of identity and safety.

Like many marginalized groups, South Asian groups face negative stereotypes and stigmatizations. South Asian groups (regardless of religion) are grouped together and become the targets of Islamophobic stigmatizations.<sup>270</sup> This has been especially exacerbated in recent years given the rhetoric of anti-Islamic hate narratives expressed by a former American politician.<sup>271</sup> Statistical evidence can be used to illustrate the reality of these stigmatizations and biases.

### 5.6.1 Reality of anti-South Asian racism in Canada<sup>272</sup>

- 42% of Canadians think discrimination against Muslims is "mainly their fault";
- 52% of Canadians feel that Muslims can only be trusted "a little" or "not at all";
- Almost one third of Canadians approved of Former American President Donald Trump's restrictions on travelers from Muslim-majority countries.

<sup>270</sup> International Civil Liberties Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, Islamic Social Services Association, Noor Cultural Centre, & Kanji, A. (2020, November). *Report on Countering Islamophobia/Anti-Muslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief*. United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/HatredAndDiscrimination.aspx>

<sup>271</sup> <https://theconversation.com/the-trump-effect-in-canada-a-600-per-cent-increase-in-online-hate-speech-86026>

<sup>272</sup> Kanji, A. (2020). Islamophobia in Canada: Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/Islamophobia-AntiMuslim/Civil%20Society%20or%20Individuals/Noor-ICLMG-ISSA.pdf>

## 5.7 An overview of restorative justice practices in schools and educational institutions

Punitive approaches to discipline have resulted in the over representation of minorities in all institutional contexts.<sup>273</sup> The main purpose of restorative justice approaches is to focus on repairing harm rather than punishing the offender.<sup>274</sup> One of the most important goals is to make sure the students' voice is heard and make this a standardized approach across the institution. This allows students to feel validated and that they are being taken seriously. Restorative justice practices will include techniques aimed at incorporating practices and strategies to build students' social/emotional skills.

### 5.7.1 Zero-tolerance and exclusionary, punitive discipline

Exclusionary punitive disciplinary measures for managing student behaviour (suspensions, expulsions, school transfers, and police intervention) are harmful practices.<sup>275-276-277</sup> One parent told the TF how it was felt that her child with ADHD was not wanted in the school environment, they experienced microaggressions by the teachers and felt that there was a lack of importance placed on resolving the issue:

*"Suspensions meant nothing to him, it only reinforced a message that he did not belong there. The teachers had nothing but punitive measures for him. They were no longer present for meetings with us, and the Principal would defend their absence every time. We felt completely isolated and unsupported".<sup>278</sup>*

As one researcher notes:

*"...zero tolerance is an inappropriate, even harmful strategy for correcting behavioural problems, especially those with emotional or neurological roots" that fosters "a cycle of disorder... a 'reciprocal, destructive relationship' with students, who 'tend to engage in more acts of self-protection and live in a heightened state of fear'. ...Creating an unwelcoming, almost jail-like, heavily scrutinized environment, may foster the violence and disorder school administrators hope to avoid."<sup>279</sup> (Skiba et al., p.46)*

<sup>273</sup> Guckenburg, S., Hurley, N., Persson, H., Fronius, T., & Petrino, A. (2016, October). *Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools; Summary Findings from Interviews with Experts*. WestEd. Pp. 4.

<sup>274</sup> Guckenberg et al. *Restorative Justice in US Schools*, p. 6.

<sup>275</sup> American Psychological Association. (2008, December 1). *APA Zero Tolerance Task Force report*. 7

<sup>276</sup> Ibid

<sup>277</sup> Rapport de la Commission Spéciale sur les Droits des Enfants et de la Protection de la Jeunesse (2021). *Instaurer une Société Bienveillante Pour Nos Enfants et Pour Nos Jeunes*. Gouvernement du Québec. pp.115

<sup>278</sup> Correspondence to The Lester B. Pearson School Board and the Task Force

<sup>279</sup> Hirschfield, Paul J. (2018). *The Role of Schools in Sustaining Juvenile Justice System Inequality*. *The Future of Children* 28(1). pp. 11-36. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/26641545](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26641545). Skiba et al. cited in hirschfield, p. 46



Even in cases where, for example, a zero-tolerance policy is adopted to manage the use of certain slurs, it must be noted that in the available research, the weight of individual biases tend to win out over the good intentions behind certain policies. The students who bear the brunt of punitive, exclusionary disciplinary measures remain those students who are already marginalized (ie. non-white students and marginalized students).<sup>280</sup> Further, it has been frequently demonstrated in research that zero-tolerance frameworks are more frequently applied to racialized and Black students in particular for more subjective infractions, as compared to white students.<sup>281•282</sup> This approach, tackling only the explicit *signs* of oppression, misunderstands how the harmful meanings of these words are produced, and how to change them. As one student puts it very clearly:

*“Their usual response, ‘Because you can’t, it’s not right’, Even me, someone who has not trained to be an educator can understand when you tell people, especially kids, that they cannot do something, it makes them curious and want to do it. Instead of telling kids they can not do something, maybe “Why shouldn’t I say the N word?” Which in turn imposes a little self reflection on why they shouldn’t rather than, no you cannot”.*<sup>283</sup>

Addressing only the words and not the processes, censor without supplementation, will only repress them so that they erupt in even more subversive ways.<sup>284</sup> This is one way by which systems of oppression mutate and then render themselves invisible, or normalized. Approaches to managing bullying behaviour should not be strictly punitive in nature, but maintain clear, recordable repercussions for students and staff that transgress in bad faith, with clear strategies to address and disrupt low-level or covert behaviour in line with these ideologies, so-called ‘good faith’ or ‘well-intentioned’ microaggressions, and that there be appropriate pedagogical and disciplinary responses that aim to teach and not vilify transgressors, as well as the entirety of the school board population, students and staff.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid

<sup>281</sup> CDPDJ (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse Québec). 2011. Profilage racial et discrimination systémique des jeunes racisés. Rapport de consultation sur le profilage racial et ses conséquences. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

<sup>282</sup> Fuentes, Annette (2014). The Schoolhouse as Jailhouse. *Counterpoints*, vol. 453, pp. 37-53, [www.jstor.org/stable/42982329](http://www.jstor.org/stable/42982329).

<sup>283</sup> Correspondence to The Lester B. Pearson School Board and the Task Force

<sup>284</sup> Kumashiro, Kevin (1999). “Barbie”, “big dicks” and “faggots”. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 15(1) pp. 27-42.

### **5.7.2 Community resources promoting restorative justice practices**

Policing structures with emphasis on punitive practices in schools compose major elements of queer and marginalized students' first contact with the criminal justice system. What is often named the 'school to prison pipeline' has notable impacts on their academic success, rates of police contact, rates of homelessness, economic and social mobility beyond school, and rates of criminality.<sup>285•286•287•288</sup> This forms a part of what is theorized as the systemic 'push-out' of marginalized students, and notably racialized students, from the school system, what is more commonly known as 'dropping-out'.<sup>289</sup> It is vitally important that every effort be made in determining alternatives to police involvement whenever possible; that disciplinary interventions that warrant outside assistance put students and their parents in contact with community organisations relevant to their social identity; and that schools engage with local community organisations dedicated to marginalized groups as part of their Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence intervention procedures.

The TF has developed a comprehensive list of community resources that can limit the police interactions that perpetuate the negative treatment of marginalized students. Included in these community resources are possible partnerships that can be established between institution and community resources. This partnership will facilitate faster, more efficient and more focused responses to disciplinary interventions. (See Annex 5, p.132)

### **5.7.3 Recommendations for a move away from punitive discipline to a restorative justice approach**

1. It is recommended that any recourse to exclusionary, punitive disciplinary measures such as suspension, expulsion, transfer and especially any and all police intervention in schools be effectively eliminated and replaced with alternative measures;<sup>290</sup>
2. It is recommended that the application of these alternative measures be intentionally used in incidents concerning marginalized and racialized students so as to offset bias with regards to 'which students are deemed chronic disruptors or 'unredeemable';<sup>291</sup>
3. We recommend a restorative justice model based on guidelines provided in Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools although American based we recognize the similarities that punitive disciplinary actions have in North America.

#### ***Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools - Summary findings from interviews with experts***

<sup>285</sup> Davis, Angela (2003). *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Seven Stories Press.

<sup>286</sup> Kathryn C Monahan et al cited in Hirschfield, Paul J. (2018). *The Role of Schools in Sustaining Juvenile Justice System Inequality*. The Future of Children 28(1). pp. 11-36. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/26641545](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26641545). Crenshaw cited in Maynard, Robyn (2017). *The Miseducation of Black Youth from Fernwood Publishing Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada slavery to the present*. Pp.208-228

<sup>287</sup> Hirschfield, *The Role of Schools in Sustaining Juvenile Justice System Inequality*, 2018

<sup>288</sup> Sudbury, Julia (2009). Maroon Abolitionists: Black Gender-Oppressed Activists in the Anti-Prison Movement in the U.S. and Canada. *Meridians*, 9(1), 2009, pp. 1-29. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/40338764](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40338764).

<sup>289</sup> Maynard, Robyn (2017). *The Miseducation of Black Youth from Fernwood Publishing Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada slavery to the present*. pp.208-228

<sup>290</sup> Hirschfield, *The Role of Schools in Sustaining Juvenile Justice System Inequality*, 2018

<sup>291</sup> Ibid

## 5.8 Further encouragement of diversity and inclusion

Allowing students to feel proud and included without dismissing their identity and culture is very important. Students should not have to choose between educational success and expressing their culture. To illustrate this we bring your attention to anecdotal evidence from the community during Black History Month in February of 2021.

*“At an educational institution in the LBPSB during the start of Black History Month I as an educator showed a documentary known as 13. This documentary provided information and knowledge about the continuing struggles Black and African American communities continue to experience with the runoff of anti-black racism in Western society. Upon announcing my intentions of showing the video a black student jumped up and exclaimed : “Black history month?! Sir, that’s me! I am black!” The student proceeded to point to another black student and exclaimed: “They are black as well sir! The surprise and excitement on the students face was a warm and welcoming sight. I felt as though they truly felt thought about and that their history and story mattered.”<sup>292</sup>*

This evidence shows the benefit of something as small as a mention of a culture's history and its positive effects on the individual. These small celebrations and awareness will show our marginalized populations that:

### 5.8.1 Recommendations regarding encouragement of diversity and inclusion

1. Community survey encouraged to increase the feeling of togetherness and family/community at the school. This survey aims to gather important information on what students and family members in the community want to be celebrated. This will vary from institution to institution because of the different surrounding demographics;
2. Ask the community and families what celebrations and events are important to them;
3. Ask the community which celebrations will help in the identity building of students;
4. Learn and encourage students cultural backgrounds.

<sup>292</sup> Correspondence to The Lester B. Pearson School Board and the Task Force

## 5.9 Conclusion

In addressing the issues and gaps in the LBPSB policies and practices the TF concluded that in these issues require the deepest attention and can be summarized into 6 defining themes, as follows:

### 5.9.1 Themes

1. *Lack of defined protocol and remedial steps for a racially or ethnically charged incident;*
2. *Lack of documentation and metrics that would provide a realistic understanding of the incidents faced by racialized populations;*
3. *Immense importance of staff professional development to address Eurocentric biases and understand issues faced by racialized populations;*
4. *Educating students to address Eurocentric biases and understand issues faced by racialized populations.*
5. *Work on reduction of the disproportionate representation of racialized populations in disciplinary policies that focus on a punitive model; and*
6. *The importance of celebrating and appreciating diverse racialized populations in the LBPSB.*

The LBPSB institutions must emphasize the promotion of an inclusive and safe space in their schools and classrooms. While understanding the “long-play” and that these changes and transitions will take time, we believe these recommendations will encourage racialized populations at the LBPSB to feel truly appreciated and welcome.

# Chapter 6 • Religions



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## 6.0 Overview

A student's religious beliefs influence their sense of identity as well as their mental and emotional health. Students who are stigmatized for their beliefs and practices in their formative years go on to have issues when it comes to self-esteem, self-worth as well as how they see the world. Teachers in LBPSB schools require additional professional development and coaching on how to talk about religions to students without reinforcing harmful stereotypes. It is critical that teachers understand that explaining the multifaceted nature of religious beliefs and the importance of religion for children's identity formation is in no way equivalent to indoctrinating or converting students. This chapter provides evidenced-based research demonstrating the ramifications of religious discrimination on student mental and emotional health as well as on academic performance.

Section 2.1 of the *Lester B. Pearson School Board's Intercultural Policy* states:

*The Lester B. Pearson School Board affirms and promotes the dignity, equality and fundamental worth of all human beings regardless of age, capabilities, ethnic origin, gender or gender identity, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or education background.*<sup>293</sup>

With this being said, in order to facilitate the LBPSB staying true to statements within their policies, the Religions subgroup set out to determine if the social perception of religions had produced any inequities within the LBPSB community. Additionally, if any inequities had been discovered, the Religions subgroup was tasked with producing doable recommendations that may facilitate the abolition of these inequities.

The following is our research and recommendations specific to different religious practices:

## 6.1 Buddhism

### 6.1.1 Research and findings

According to Statistics Canada there were 366,830 Buddhists living in Canada in 2011<sup>294</sup> (1.1% of the population). In Quebec in 2011, there were 52,390 Buddhists<sup>295</sup> (0.68% of the population).

<sup>293</sup> Lester B. Pearson School Board. (2020) *Intercultural Policy*. Retrieved 4 June 2021: [https://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Council/docs/policies/Intercultural\\_Policy\\_Sep.21\\_2020\\_ADOPTED.pdf](https://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/Modules/FileManagement/files/Root/Council/docs/policies/Intercultural_Policy_Sep.21_2020_ADOPTED.pdf). (3)

<sup>294</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-003-x/2014001/section03/33-eng.htm>

<sup>295</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism\\_in\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Canada)

In general, Buddhism is highly regarded in North America, with the practices of meditation and mindfulness and the profile of the Dalai Lama. However, it is important to apply an intersectional framework to understand the interconnection between Anti-Asian racism and anti-Buddhist discrimination as many Buddhists are of East Asian descent. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent Anti-Asian rhetoric of some, Anti-Asian racism has now become prevalent in both the USA and Canada<sup>296•297•298•299</sup>. There have been several high-profile incidents such as the Atlanta shootings<sup>300</sup>, and an increase in hate crimes and violent attacks on Asian people in public spaces.

The government of Canada has a resource site on Anti-Asian racism.<sup>301</sup> Project 1907 is another excellent resource for information on the same subject.<sup>302</sup>

## 6.2 Christianity

### 6.2.1 Research and findings

Research suggests that Christian students who demonstrate their faith in non-Christian schools are often perceived as deviant or inferior, and are stereotyped because of their faith practices.<sup>303</sup> This study suggests that the rate of discriminatory incidents against Christian students increases when combined with an intersectional identity element such as minority status (i.e. race, class, etc.). Christian students who also possess minority status are more likely to face microaggressions and even violent attacks.<sup>304</sup> These attacks include what Dupper et al refer to as “Religious bullying” - the unprovoked physical or psychological mistreatment of an individual by one person, or a group of people, over time to create an ongoing pattern of abuse against which the victim cannot easily defend him or herself. This religious bullying includes behaviours which can be traumatic, even though the perpetrator may not view it in such a manner. One example of such an aggression is the expectation of others that marginalized Christian students speak as a representative for their entire religious community (e.g. a teacher referring to a student as “*Catholic girl*” and expecting the student to defend the opinion of all Catholics after the student’s presentation on Catholicism. This teacher further allowed the student’s classmates to refer to her as *Catholic girl* as well).<sup>305</sup>

<sup>296</sup> <https://www.peacheycounselling.ca/resources/2021/anti-asian-racism-in-canada-does-exist>

<sup>297</sup> <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2021/04/05/anti-asian-racism-is-real-in-canada-and-i-will-no-longer-hide.html>

<sup>298</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/anti-asian-racism-reaches-crisis-point-in-canada-advocates-say/ar-BB1eT0Bw>

<sup>299</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/7711053/anti-asian-racism-canada-kids/>

<sup>300</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/atlanta-shooting-spa-robert-long-8-killed/>

<sup>301</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/asian-heritage-month/anti-asian-racism.html>

<sup>302</sup> <https://www.project1907.org/resources>

<sup>303</sup> Dupper, D; Forrest-Bank, S; Lowry-Carusillo, A. “Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public School Settings: Findings from Focus Groups Involving Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Unitarian Universalist Youths.” *Children & Schools*, Volume 37, Issue 1, January 2015, Pages 37 45, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdu029>

<sup>304</sup> Ibid

<sup>305</sup> Dupper, D; Forrest-Bank, S; Lowry-Carusillo, A. “Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public School Settings: Findings from Focus Groups Involving Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Unitarian Universalist Youths.” *Children & Schools*, Volume 37, Issue 1, January 2015, Pages 37 45, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdu029>



Part of this lasting legacy is the inability to pinpoint these “hidden causes” of less-than-ideal behaviors on the part of those that have been traumatized. As a result, this systematic abuse of power can leave children feeling defenseless, especially if they don’t have teachers or other authority figures that advocate for them. These feelings of powerlessness can impact students’ performance in the classroom, leaving them to feel singled out solely on the basis of their religious affiliation.<sup>306</sup>

When such trauma or “hidden causes” affect performance, it can negatively affect students’ self-perception of academic ability. Children often feel “stupid”, as though they cannot learn unless they have a support system to counter these negative feelings or assumptions. Such vulnerability can cause students to feel unsafe and scared, especially when teachers or other administrators and authority figures do not come to the defense of those in their care.

In order to combat the negative effects of these microaggressions and other sources of trauma, we need authority figures (i.e. Teachers, mentors, other administrators, etc.) with adequate training to advocate for individual students who do not have an intrinsic support system. For staff that work directly with students who may be the source of these microaggressions, there needs to be guided reflection to examine how their actions have perpetuated the victimization of students. Such reflections and subsequent training should be geared at helping authority figures recognize microaggressions so they can admonish students who engage in victimizing other students.<sup>307</sup>

## 6.3 Hinduism

### 6.3.1 Research and findings

According to Statistics Canada there were 497,965 Hindus living in Canada in 2011<sup>308</sup> (1.5% of the population). In Quebec in 2011, there were 33,540 Hindus<sup>309</sup> (0.4% of the population). In the last ten years these numbers have gone up due to immigration from India. In addition, in 2019 there were 642,000 international students in Canada, out of which 34% were from India.<sup>310</sup> There are a large number of Hindu students studying in Canada in any given year.

As a minority community, Hindus in the Indian diaspora face discrimination in many different countries around the world. In North America there have been several different types of discrimination:

<sup>306</sup> Ibid

<sup>307</sup> Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi; *The Danger of a Single Story*. Films for the Humanities & Sciences (Firm); Films Media Group. New York, N.Y. : Films Media Group, [2012], ©2009.

<sup>308</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-003-x/2014001/section03/33-eng.htm>

<sup>309</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism\\_in\\_Canada#Politics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_in_Canada#Politics)

<sup>310</sup> <https://www.cicnews.com/2020/02/642000-international-students-canada-now-ranks-3rd-globally-in-foreign-student-attraction-0213763.html#gs.y7enbq>

### 6.3.2 Racial slurs

In the 1970s and 1980s in Canada, Hindus most of whom are of South Asians descent were often called ‘Paki’.<sup>311</sup> As recently as 2018, a Toronto man of Indian descent was confronted by a white woman yelling at him over a parking dispute, saying “go back to your country” and telling him he has “shit-coloured skin”.<sup>312</sup> In a letter from the community sent to the Task Force, a student noted:

*“From elementary to high school, more times than I could count, I was bullied. Called a ‘Paki’, ‘smelly’ and a variety of other things, by other students.”*

### 6.3.3 Vandalism against temples

With the rise of the Hindu population in North America, there have also been sporadic cases of hate crimes. In 2019, the Swaminarayan Temple in Kentucky was vandalized.<sup>313</sup> In April 2015, a Hindu temple in north Texas was vandalized when racist images were spray-painted on its walls. In February 2015, Hindu temples in Kent and the Seattle Metropolitan area were also vandalized.<sup>314•315</sup> In March 2013, a Hindu Temple in Surrey, British Columbia was vandalized by two men with baseball bats.<sup>316</sup>

### 6.3.4 Portrayal of Hinduism in textbooks

In 2005, there was a controversy over the portrayal of Hinduism in a California textbook. Two American Hindu organizations complained to California's Curriculum Commission, arguing that the coverage in a sixth grade history textbooks of Indian History and Hinduism was biased against Hinduism.<sup>317</sup> Such an incident demonstrates the need for larger discussion on how Eurocentric and Judeo-Christian worldviews should not dominate school curriculum.

## 6.4 Indigenous spirituality

### 6.4.1 Research and findings

There is an inherent limitation in the method of approaching this research in that the focus of this subcommittee is the impact *Religion* has on the student experience. The limitation is found in the fact that Indigenous *Spirituality* is intertwined within Indigenous philosophy - one cannot explore spirituality in an Indigenous context without taking a more holistic approach to globally examine the Indigenous experience. Even then, further limitations exist in that various Indigenous groups have their own practices, experience and needs. As such, the spirit of the research listed below is compiled with the basal understanding that Indigenous Spirituality (and not religion, as this is not a Western perspective) is entrenched in Indigenous practices and realities and cannot reasonably be extracted from, or examined, outside the Indigenous experience.

<sup>311</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paki\\_\(slur\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paki_(slur))

<sup>312</sup> <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/us-canada-news/indian-man-racially-abused-in-canada-told-to-go-back-to-your-country/articleshow/65500762.cms>

<sup>313</sup> <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/hindu-temple-vandalised-in-us/article26136111.ece>

<sup>314</sup> <https://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2015/02/28/second-hindu-temple-gets-vandalized-in-washington-state/>

<sup>315</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-nn-washington-hindu-temple-20150228-story.html>

<sup>316</sup> <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/us-canada-news/Hate-crime-Hindu-temple-in-Canada-vandalized/articleshow/20809126.cms>

<sup>317</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California\\_textbook\\_controversy\\_over\\_Hindu\\_history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_textbook_controversy_over_Hindu_history)

With that understanding, the term “Indigenous Spirituality” is used in line with the definition as prescribed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission report on Indigenous spiritual practices as referring to “the spiritual beliefs and practices that Indigenous peoples identify as being “traditional” or “customary” among Indigenous peoples”, with the understanding that “Other terms may be used or preferred by Indigenous peoples, including those that are more specific to a Nation, language, place and/or people.”<sup>318</sup>

#### **6.4.1.1 Issues Indigenous students face**

The most overarching issue Indigenous students face in the current school context is the pervasive conflict between Western teachings in schools and Indigenous practices and beliefs carried out at home.<sup>319</sup> On a day-to-day basis, this disconnect between Western and Indigenous ideologies perpetuates alienation of Indigenous students from Western-based school culture. Moreover, in a wider view, the continuation of the dominance of Westernized culture (due to settler-colonialism) means that Indigenous views of the world and approaches to education are being brought into jeopardy as generations of Indigenous students are pushed into Western schools. The danger on both fronts lies in that typical Western approaches to teaching can present an impediment to learning for Indigenous students, to the extent that they focus on compartmentalized knowledge without necessarily focusing on how academic disciplines relate to one another, or to the surrounding universe. As a result, many Indigenous students fail to learn how to live a fulfilling life in the context of Western education without abandoning their Indigenous heritage and beliefs. This phenomenon can create a perceived lack of innate intelligence, ingenuity, or problem-solving skills on the part of the students. As such, many Indigenous students experience a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the experience of schooling in its conventional form.<sup>320</sup>

### **6.5 Islam**

#### **6.5.1 Research and findings**

A large body of research has examined how especially in the post-9/11 context, Muslim students have experienced a significant amount of Islamophobia. Islamophobia in schools manifests both through overtly racist comments as well as systemic forms of racism including what Said (1979) terms “Orientalist”<sup>321</sup> (defined as the representation of Asia, especially the Middle East, in a stereotypical way that is regarded as embodying a colonialist attitude as per the Oxford dictionary) depictions within course material and library books. Studies have shown that stereotypical and negative representations of the ‘threatening’ Muslim ‘Other’ have appeared in textbooks across Quebec secondary schools.<sup>322</sup> It is critical to situate these studies in the wider context of the dominant public’s perceptions of Muslim communities in Quebec.

<sup>318</sup> <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-creed/11-indigenous-spiritual-practices>

<sup>319</sup> Kawagley, A., & Barnhardt, R. (1998). Education Indigenous to Place: Western Science meets Native Reality. Accessed: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED426823.pdf>

<sup>320</sup> Ibid

<sup>321</sup> Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism*. Vintage.

<sup>322</sup> Mc Andrew, M. (2010). The Muslim community and education in Quebec: Controversies and mutual adaptation. *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration internationale*, 11(1), 41-58.

Recent polls indicate that 69 per cent of Quebecois(es) have biases towards Islam, while 54 per cent of Canadians as a whole have a negative opinion of the faith.<sup>323</sup> In his research with male Muslim teens in Quebec secondary schools, Bakali (2017)<sup>324</sup> suggests that anti-Muslim racism experienced by male teens in Quebec schools was influenced by a combination of the governmental policy on secularism, mainstream media discourses in Quebec, as well as the clichéd archetypes and tropes of Muslims that have emerged throughout North America via narratives related to the “War on Terror”.

The Task Force has received letters from the community demonstrating how some teachers do indeed hold biased views about Muslims. For instance, one letter detailed an incident in which a Muslim-identifying high-school student was told by his white teacher in front of the whole class:

*“You know what [name of student withheld to respect anonymity]? I don’t know how they treat women in your family, but in mine they treat women with respect.”*

Such a racist trope echoes the dominant narrative in mainstream Canadian (and Western media more generally) that suggests the need to “save” the supposed imperiled Muslim woman from her purported hyper-patriarchal Islamic culture.<sup>325</sup>

#### **6.5.1.1 Recent examples of Islamophobia in Montreal schools**

Dominant discourse and debates around “freedom of speech” in schools has led to the polarization and stigmatization of students. One recent example involves a Montreal North high-school teacher who was suspended not only for using the N-word in class on numerous occasions but for humiliating and “othering” his Muslim and other students. He would post Islamophobic cartoon editorials on his classroom door and once asked all his Muslim students to apologize and acknowledge their supposed complicity in the Charlie Hebdo shootings of 2015.<sup>326</sup>

One letter the Task Force received from the community recounts an experience from a Muslim woman who wears a hijab who, when working as a student teacher at a LBPSB high-school, approached the Spiritual Animator to see if the school could accommodate daily prayers for Muslim students. When a history teacher found out about this Muslim student teacher’s request, he confronted her in person and told her:

*“If we let you pray in the school, we might as well let the Rastafarians smoke weed.”*

Such a racist comment not only demonstrates how Islam in school settings may be perceived as a criminal practice but it also conveys racist and essentialist understanding of Rastafarians – assuming their spiritual practices can be reduced to smoking marijuana.

<sup>323</sup> Angus Reid. (2013). Canadians view non-Christian religions with uncertainty. <https://angusreid.org/canadians-view-non-christian-religions-with-uncertainty-dislike/>

<sup>324</sup> Bakali, N. (2017). Islamophobia in Quebec secondary schools: Inquiries into the experiences of Muslim male youth post-9/11. In *Muslim Students, Education and Neoliberalism* (pp. 145-159). Palgrave Macmillan, London. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-56921-9\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-56921-9_10)

<sup>325</sup> Jiwani, Y. (2018). Doubling discourses and the veiled other: Mediations of race and gender in Canadian media. *Race and Racialization*, 2E: *Essential Readings*, p. 489.

<sup>326</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/n-word-high-school-henri-bourassa-1.5781471>

### **6.5.1.2 *Racist representations in mainstream media***

When examining harmful discourses related to Muslim students that circulate within Quebec school environments, we need to understand how ideologies are formulated in part through media exposure. Such ideologies can be especially alienating and stigmatizing for Muslim and non-Muslim students alike when they are reinforced via hierarchies of power – for instance, teachers showing media containing stereotypical and racist depictions to students.

### **6.5.1.3 *Fostering belonging***

When schools fail to foster a learning space in which students' religious identities (and other forms of identity such as race, gender, disability) are acknowledged and affirmed, there may be detrimental effects on these students' identity formation and school performance.

When Muslim students exhibit poor academic performance in school, the assumption is that they are lacking and not working hard. This assumption ignores systemic factors (i.e. the schools failure to take concrete steps in eliminating racism in the school) and the reality that experiencing racism in school can lead to students performing poorly due to anxiety and depression.<sup>327</sup>

## **6.6 Judaism**

Jewish students continue to deal with Anti-Semitism and discrimination. Many Jewish parents, therefore, feel that they must enroll their children into Jewish schools to allow them to embrace their roots and practice their faith. An estimated 70% of Jewish students are educated in private schools in France.<sup>328</sup> Similar practices are found in Montreal. Jewish parents wish to both protect their children from the detrimental and traumatic affects of Anti-Semitism while educating their children in their Jewish culture and faith.

### **6.6.1 *Jewish students may be afraid to embrace their identity out of fear of any backlash***

This is an important issue as it may negatively impact a student's mental and emotional health and wellbeing to not feel at one with their identity. The effects of this may not be realized until much later in life - creating unnecessary burdens for these students to have to live with. When any segment of the population feels othered or not included, it may create a rift amongst the student population. Those students are less likely to participate in community activities or events. Their lack of participation further compounds the problem. This may lead to a lack of representation in student activities, governance and in the community in general.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid

<sup>328</sup> <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2019/02/21/01016-20190221ARTFIG00299-environ-30-des-eleves-juifs-sont-scolarises-dans-le-public.php>

This can, as a result, create a second tier sentiment amongst the community; those who can freely and openly feel welcomed for who they are, and those who must conceal their identity or practice their faith in private out of fear of judgement.

Troubling studies reveal the extent of the prejudices and stereotypes conveyed in the student environment.<sup>329</sup> A staggering 89% of Jewish students surveyed said they had been the victim of at least one anti-Semitic act (insult, aggression, "light-hearted" joke about the Shoah, stereotype) during their studies. "In an effort to be as close as possible to the reality of the field, we compared these answers to those given by non-Jewish students. However, 45% of the latter said they had witnessed at least one anti-Semitic act during their studies. This gives an idea of the extent of the phenomenon,"<sup>330</sup> explains Frédéric Dabi, deputy director general of Ifop (The Institut français d'opinion publique (IFOP; English: French Institute of Public Opinion).

Of the Jewish students who say they were once victims of anti-Semitic acts, only 1% say they filed a complaint, 8% reported it to the administration of their university or school, 19% said nothing for fear of reprisals, and 58% tried to resolve the situation directly with the people concerned. "This shows the abysmal gap between the official discourse, which proclaims that any anti-Semitic act should be the subject of a complaint, and the reality on the ground,"<sup>331</sup> says Frédéric Dabi.<sup>332</sup>

## 6.7 Sikhism

### 6.7.1 Research and findings

Although Sikhism is the world's fifth largest religion<sup>333</sup> there is still a significant lack of knowledge about Sikh identity and religious philosophies within dominant white society in North America. Because the Sikh turban (referred to as a *pagri* or *patka*) commonly worn by men and boys is an overt religious symbol, Sikhs living in the global North have become targets of racism ranging from micro-aggressions to hate speech as well as white supremacist terrorist attacks.<sup>334</sup> Since the September 11th, 2001 attacks, the image of a brown-skinned male with a beard and turban is often incorrectly conflated with Muslim identity<sup>335</sup> and in some instances assumed to symbolize terrorism.<sup>336</sup>

<sup>329</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6835631/Nine-ten-Jewish-students-France-experienced-anti-Semitism-study-finds.html>

<sup>330</sup> Ibid

<sup>331</sup> Ibid

<sup>332</sup> <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/90-percent-of-french-jewish-students-subject-to-antisemitism-during-studies/>

<sup>333</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/03/opinions/sikh-faith-bullied-winty-singh-opinion/index.html>, <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/go-home-terrorist.pdf>

<sup>334</sup> Chandrashekar, S. (2017). Engendering threat in the guise of protection: Orientalism and Sikh vulnerability. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 12(4), 366-381.

<sup>335</sup> Jhutti-Johal, J., & Singh, H. (2019). *Racialization, Islamophobia and Mistaken Identity: The Sikh Experience*. London: Routledge.

<sup>336</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2001-10-02-0110020271-story.html>



In Canada, anti-Sikh racism often operates in more mundane yet harmful ways. There was the case of Jennifer Bush, a white member of the anti-Islamic group Rise Canada, who during a 2017 NDP leadership campaign event, screamed at Jagmeet Singh, the federal leader of the New Democratic Party, and accused him of supporting Sharia Law and the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>337</sup> Such an incident exemplifies how even a prominent public figure like Singh is not immune to anti-Sikh racist attacks because of his identity and religious attire.

According to the Sikh Coalition, just over 50% of all American Sikh children report school bullying. For turbaned Sikh children, that number jumps to a staggering 67% – nearly double the national average.<sup>338</sup> In the Canadian context, anti-Sikh systemic racism has in recent history been mobilized via dominant discourse. This was evident during the 2006 *Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys* Supreme Court case as well as the 2011 ban of the kirpan within the Quebec National Assembly. Studying these two cases, Dhamoon (2013) examines the ways in which Sikhs who do not wear the kirpan (i.e. ceremonial dagger) may be perceived as “model minorities”<sup>339</sup> but when the kirpan is worn, Sikhs are seen as unable to assimilate into dominant Canadian culture and its accepted forms of multiculturalism.<sup>340</sup>

## 6.8 Recommendations

### 6.8.1 Recommendation regarding Buddhist students

The Toronto District School Board’s resource - Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educators,<sup>341</sup> can be used as a guide to address biases, micro-aggressions, prejudices and discrimination leading to lateral violence and internalized oppression by supporting allyship, solidarity and inclusion.

<sup>337</sup> <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2017/09/11/the-problem-with-jagmeet-singhs-love-and-courage-reaction-to-heckler-paradkar.html>

<sup>338</sup> The Sikh Coalition (2014). “Go Home Terrorist”: A Report on Bullying Against Sikh American School Children”.

<sup>339</sup> This model minority myth is premised on racist stereotypes that characterize all South Asian-Americans and East Asian-Americans as polite and law-abiding group and as citizens who have achieved a higher level of success than the general population through a combination of innate talent and “pull-yourselfes-up-by-your-bootstraps” immigrant striving. The reason why this myth is harmful is because it ignores nuances within visible minority communities and systemic discrimination that may result in varying levels of social and economic prosperity within these communities (see <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/what-is-the-model-minority-myth>).

<sup>340</sup> Dhamoon, R. K. (2013). Exclusion and regulated inclusion: The case of the Sikh kirpan in Canada. *Sikh Formations*, 9(1), 7-28.

<sup>341</sup> Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educators A Resource for Educators (tdsb.on.ca)

## 6.8.2 Recommendations regarding Christian students

# Recommendations

In order to make schools safer for Christian students, research shows a need for schools to implement strategies designed to increase religious tolerance in diverse public schools.<sup>342</sup>

1. Conduct a systematic review of school policies with a Diversity and Inclusion lens to ensure regulations do not encourage or perpetuate intolerance towards students belonging to religious minorities.
  - a. To avoid any bias, an external auditor is needed to examine all policies that directly affect students' educational experience to understand the direct and indirect impact of these policies on students from religious minorities.
  - b. As a result of this review, the practitioner should produce recommendations with benchmarks to be achieved at specific time intervals as determined by the review and the needs of the student population.
2. Implement Hands-on, interactive workshops for all staff led by a qualified Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) practitioner to help staff recognize and stop the occurrence, tolerance, and perpetuation of microaggressions.
  - a. The purpose of this workshop would be to help staff recognize and stop the misuse of power (or lack of intervention) that encourages such bullying; instead, staff will learn how to recognize microaggressions and be equipped to intervene appropriately, helping to protect students from being victimized because of their faith practices.
  - b. In order to avoid the common scenario of reverting back to old habits at the conclusion of these workshops, staff must participate in immersive, multiphase training experiences that will help each member understand the principles of bias and how they work. The goal of these exercises is not to eliminate bias but to increase awareness of participants' own biases so that staff can learn the strategies needed to control for those biases and not allow them to pose a barrier to the progress of any student.

<sup>342</sup> Dupper, D; Forrest-Bank, S; Lowry-Carusillo, A. "Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public School Settings: Findings from Focus Groups Involving Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Unitarian Universalist Youths." *Children & Schools*, Volume 37, Issue 1, January 2015, pp. 37-45, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdu029>

### 6.8.2 Recommendations regarding Christian students (continued)

# Recommendations

3. Offer a diversity of curricular and extra-curricular offerings that encourage the mutual sharing of different narratives representative within the student body (not just religious orientation/practice).
  - a. Curricular offerings:

Vary the texts, references, speakers, and pedagogical tools used in the classroom to stimulate and facilitate deep learning. This can be done by including sources from different religious standpoints as a means of generating discussion to teach students how to examine evidence and draw conclusions for themselves (i.e. teaching students how to learn and think critically versus teaching them what to think).
  - b. Extracurricular offerings:

Provide a mechanism through which students can create groups and/or clubs that receive school support in the form of a faculty advisor in an effort to validate subgroups. These groups should have student space where such groups can not only meet amongst themselves without threat of being displaced but can also share their stories with the school community in a safe environment.
4. Recognize religious holidays or offering accommodation for demonstrated religious observances when possible.
  - a. It is important to include the mention of Standard Religious holidays in announcements so that students who celebrate these religious observances do not feel censored or unintelligent for holding certain beliefs or practicing their faith.
  - b. For many students, their faith is tied to their culture and their families. When student beliefs are marginalized, that marginalization extends to their families and can cause students to feel like second-class citizens because of the deep-rooted beliefs of their family and/or home community.

### 6.8.3 Recommendations regarding Hinduism

# Recommendations

1. The school board should accommodate religious dietary requirements including vegetarian and vegan options;
2. The school board should ensure that all students in the youth sector are taught about different cultures and religions and their traditions;
3. Encourage teachers to take courses on promoting religious tolerance such as one launched by Harvard University:  
<https://www.openculture.com/2018/03/harvard-launches-a-free-online-course-to-promote-religious-tolerance-understanding.html>;
4. Schools should provide a safe space allowing students an opportunity to share aspects of their faith or express their faith;<sup>343</sup>
5. The school board can adopt some of the lessons from the Learning for Justice courses on Religion: [https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons?keyword=&field\\_topic%5B2%5D=2](https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons?keyword=&field_topic%5B2%5D=2);
6. A partnership between the community groups and the spiritual animators to bring in a variety of speakers to present on Hinduism;
7. Teachers should be encouraged not to make assumptions about background, beliefs and practice. Each student from a religious minority can have a different view of their religion and can have different practices;<sup>344</sup>
8. The school board should avoid religious names for non-religious events. For example, use the terminology 'winter break' instead of 'Christmas break';
9. The school board should acknowledge religious hate crimes;
10. If the new Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) curriculum removes the teaching of religions and the promotion of religious tolerance, equivalent material should be added to the History curriculum.

<sup>343</sup> <https://www.edutopia.org/article/creating-learning-environment-where-all-kids-feel-valued>

<sup>344</sup> <https://www.presence.io/blog/7-best-practices-for-making-religious-minority-students-feel-welcome/>

# Recommendations

## 6.8.4 Recommendations regarding Indigenous spirituality

1. In order to make schools safer for all students, there is a need to generate a greater level of respect for the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of both Western or popular and, Indigenous cultural traditions.<sup>345</sup> In order to accomplish this, the first recommendation would be to develop and maintain an ongoing partnership with local Indigenous elders. Such a partnership should and can be used as a forum for the continuous review of student-directed policies to ensure that policies and school practices respect the reality of Indigenous students' experiences. Systematically consulting this board of Elders and including such a group in both the review and amendment of existing policies will ensure that regulations do not unintentionally disenfranchise or disadvantage Indigenous members of the school community.
2. In addition to creating a permanent board of Elders with which to work, the next recommendation would be to create a cross-cultural immersion program for non-Native educators. This immersive instructional program for educators should be co-created between representatives of the LBPSB and the board of Elders. This program can be held at a remote camp location (neutral territory) with Native elders as instructors as an element of pedagogical development. Such a pedagogical exercise, done every other year or as needed, will emphasize the open discussion needed for educators to facilitate practical classroom conversations regarding areas of common ground that exist across world views.
3. In order to continue the learning throughout the year and extend the instruction to the students, there needs to be a revision of the curriculum to include consideration of Indigenous implications for a 'pedagogy of place' as part of the regular curriculum.<sup>346</sup> This becomes essential in both recognizing and appreciating Indigenous notions of an interdependent universe and the importance of place in their societies. These principles can be best integrated into the existing curriculum through consultation with the previously-mentioned board of elders, pedagogical consultants and through the partnership of the cross-cultural immersion program for non-Native educators. A main element behind the purpose of such an integrated, inclusive approach to the general curriculum would be to cast explanations of natural phenomena first in Native terms to which students can relate, and then explain those same phenomena in western terms to bring significance to learning in Indigenous contexts. This balanced view of the curriculum allows both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to develop an appreciation and an understanding of how Indigenous ideologies compare and are often congruent with Western principles and philosophies and do not need to be seen as mutually exclusive, substandard, or superior in any way.

<sup>345</sup> Kawagley, A., & Barnhardt, R. (1998). Education Indigenous to Place: Western Science meets Native Reality. Accessed: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED426823.pdf>

<sup>346</sup> Ibid

# Recommendations

## 6.8.4 Recommendations regarding Indigenous spirituality (continued)

4. In addition, it is recommended that the school board and its local schools utilize open forums such as town halls and other open gatherings both as a means of practically sharing information with Indigenous and other underrepresented groups and garnering feedback from community stakeholders (parents, students, etc.). It is essential to ensure that all partners are able to join such a meeting (i.e. access to internet and technology; devices for virtual assemblies or provisions of phone number(s) to participate via phone, scheduled at a time when working parents would be able to participate, etc). This measure will assist the LBPSB and other governing bodies in considering the cultural and historical context of the potential impact of decisions, particularly in terms of who is determining what the rules of engagement are to be, and how those rules are to be implemented when examining educational issues.<sup>347</sup>

<sup>347</sup> Kawagley, A., & Barnhardt, R. (1998). Education Indigenous to Place: Western Science meets Native Reality. Accessed: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED426823.pdf>



### 6.8.5 Recommendations regarding Muslim students

# Recommendations

1. To tackle the issue of teachers presenting Islamophobic or what Said (1979) terms “Orientalist”<sup>348</sup> media representations of Muslims in class (e.g. films, TV segments, books), we suggest all teaching staff (in particular, secondary 1 to 5 teachers) watch Sut Jhally’s 2006 documentary film “Reel Bad Arabs”. Critical media literacy is essential for LBPSB teachers.
2. Teachers must be trained to identify and omit books that contain harmful depictions of Muslims (or any other group marginalized because of race, faith, dis/ability, class, or gender). We ask that all teaching staff (Kindergarten to secondary 5) and librarians watch this video lecture by scholar Philip Nel who discusses the often overlooked racism of children’s literature: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgX-QawahyE> as well as this TED talk by Chinese-American children’s author Grace Lin who discusses the importance of the diverse representation in children’s literature and the concept of “windows and mirrors”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_wQ8wiV3FVo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wQ8wiV3FVo)
3. School librarians should be asked to refer to these online resources in order to ensure diverse and anti-racist children’s literature is acquired and prioritized by LBPSB schools:
  - Representations of Muslims in children’s literature  
[https://hijablibrarians.com/2020/10/03/evaluating-muslims-in-kidlit-a-guide-for-librarians-educators-and-reviewers/?fbclid=IwAR0CG0aiaTQH7lyl63iKxjsdJGANVcwMyR0gQTIV\\_QmKQisIYeN5d81U8M](https://hijablibrarians.com/2020/10/03/evaluating-muslims-in-kidlit-a-guide-for-librarians-educators-and-reviewers/?fbclid=IwAR0CG0aiaTQH7lyl63iKxjsdJGANVcwMyR0gQTIV_QmKQisIYeN5d81U8M)
  - The Conscious Kid: <https://www.theconsciouskid.org/>
4. LBPSB should ensure that Muslim students (and students of other faiths) have a space dedicated for them to do their daily prayers.
5. In order to foster a sense of belonging and an affirmation of one’s identity and faith in schools, representation should be prioritized. In the case of Muslim students, this may include children’s books in school libraries that feature Muslim characters wearing hijabs (or not), practicing religious rituals, or simply doing everyday activities unrelated to their faith. Speaking to the importance of diverse representation, Bishop (1990)<sup>349</sup> argues that “books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience.”<sup>350</sup>

<sup>348</sup> Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism*. Vintage.

<sup>349</sup> <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>, p.1.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid

### 6.8.6 Recommendations regarding Jewish students

## Recommendations

1. Provide Jewish students with opportunities to share facets of their faith with fellow students;
2. Support students who wear a kippah in a classroom and educate non-Jewish students about its importance to the faith;
3. Assist student body to recognize and reject anti-Semitic stereotypes and thinking;
4. Educators need to be sensitive to, and challenge, anti-semitic language, in media, society, schools and provide students with tools to combat them;
5. Create community partnerships between schools and Jewish organizations to provide resources and learning opportunities.

### 6.8.7 Recommendations regarding Sikh students

## Recommendations

1. As part of the curriculum on Canadian history, teachers can discuss how NDP leader Jagmeet Singh experienced racism while growing up<sup>351</sup> but also during his political career.<sup>352</sup> Students should learn how he is an important Canadian public figure who continues to directly challenge systemic racism despite receiving backlash for it from other politicians. For instance, in June 2020, Singh was ordered to leave the Canadian House of Commons for breaking parliamentary rules of decorum. He accused another Member of Parliament of being racist and refused to apologize for his accusation. The optics of a brown-skinned turbaned Sikh man being forced out of the room by a white Speaker of the House for calling out racism are quite striking;<sup>353</sup>
2. Teachers as part of anti-racist training should be asked to watch the episode of W. Kamau Bell's television series "United Shades of America" that focuses on Sikh communities.<sup>354</sup> Teachers should be encouraged to show this episode to their students as well (high-school students in particular).

<sup>351</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/4055658/jagmeet-singh-racism-turban-children-first-time-i-was-called/>

<sup>352</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/jagmeet-singh-stands-against-hate-1.4284473>

<sup>353</sup> Yoganathan, N. (2020) Jagmeet Singh's treatment in parliament is a telling reminder of Canada's entrenched denial of racism. *Canadian Dimension*. <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/jagmeet-singhs-treatment-in-parliament-a-telling-reminder-of-canadas-entrenched-denial-of-racism>

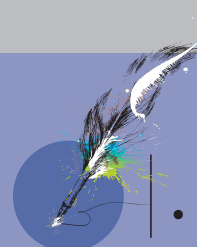
<sup>354</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2018/04/30/uso-sikhs-ron-2.cnn>

## 6.9 General Recommendations (from members of our sub-committee, not based on empirical evidence)

1. Teaching tolerance of different religions;<sup>355</sup>
2. Concrete demonstrations of diversity and inclusion via long-term and ongoing projects rather than only symbolic gestures that claim to support anti-racist initiatives. Tokenistic and performative diversity is not helpful in leading to significant change;
3. Schools should be aware of holidays celebrated by various religious groups (not only Judeo-Christian families) and not hold major school events and mandatory examinations on these holidays;
4. Schools should invite speakers who represent different religious communities to speak to students as one possible method of challenging stereotypes and myths about religious groups.

<sup>355</sup> The Task Force has not been able to obtain research literature or statistics that document cases of systemic discrimination against atheist/agnostic students in Quebec and Canadian schools. Considering the secular context of public schools in Quebec (as opposed to private Catholic, Islamic or Jewish schools), atheist/agnostic views overtly or implicitly conveyed by students are arguably compatible with much of the dominant discourse in Quebec. Further research needs to be conducted to determine whether there have been recent incidents of, for instance, students voicing atheist/agnostic views during a class lecture on religion and whether such students have been ostracized by teachers or fellow students for their comments.

# Chapter 7 • Conclusion



Written by:  
• Dr. Myrna Lashley

## Discussion

This report is the culmination of the work of the TF of the LBPSB. Even though the name may suggest that the TF is an outgrowth of the Board, in reality its membership was composed of individuals who represented all geographical areas of the territory served by the school board. The student body; the many sectors of the administration; supportive staff; and parental groups, were included in the composition. We also made sure that major socially constructed divisions of society were prominently represented. It is important to note that although the work of the TF and the recommendations emanating from it benefits all within LBPSB, the focus of the efforts and the resulting proposals remain firmly focused on the needs and well-being of students. Of course, it cannot be denied that a happy and satisfied staff member has less occupational stress and is thus more likely to be fully attuned to the needs of students. Stated vernacularly, 'it is a win-win situation'.

## Importance of evidence

Our major findings indicate that although their accessibility and implementation leave something to be desired, the school board actually has policies in place to address many of the challenges faced by students and others. This was seen not only through the examination of documents, but also through the letters sent to the TF. Letters from the community highlight that there is lots of work to be done and that, furthermore, policies must go beyond being performative (that is to say, having a policy to show that there is a policy) They must be put into action and people must be held accountable when they are not.

Of course, in order to produce appropriate recommendations, the TF needed to go beyond the scrutiny of documents and reading of letters. Therefore, we also referred to the published work of those with proven expertise in the field of education and other adjacent disciplines (ex. sociology, mental health disciplines, critical race theory; religious studies etc.). The significance of this decision is that the recommendations found within the report are those based on established evidence, rather than on the personal 'beliefs' or 'feelings' of the members. This was a critical commitment made by each TF member and sub-group at the beginning of the process. It should be stated that at no time did the TF find itself at odds with the ideas and positions expressed by the aforementioned experts.

Even though it must be recognized that some of the recommendations will take longer to come to fruition than others, the oft heard statement 'it will take time' must not be an excuse not to proceed with attaching actions to the recommendations. To paraphrase Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., time can be used destructively or constructively and those who want to deter progress are often more adept at using time than those who identify the necessity for change. LBPSB must make sure to use its time constructively and strategically in implementing the changes suggested by the recommendations. The work cannot be delayed.

## **The long play**

Clearly, implementing the changes may require new or restructured resources, but in order to demonstrate good faith and validate the time and initiative taken by parents, and students, to become engaged and respond to the call for input, LBPSB must do what is necessary to indicate that such engagement was taken seriously and is being respected.

None of what has just been stated, ignores the fact that the recommendations and changes they engender, call for a long-term commitment and investment and will not bring about overnight transformation. Moreover, since the recommendations of the TF call for a major modification in the manner in which LBPSB applies its policies and procedures, we are very aware that our recommendations are not indicative of a finish line, but the beginning of a long, continuing journey. Additionally, it is a matter of what is referred to as ‘the long play’ as the full importance of some changes and policies instituted today may not be fully appreciated until much later - even years from the time of their implantation. Just as with any other form of education, learnings taught today may not be fully manifested until the student of today becomes the adult of tomorrow. It is, therefore, important that all recognize that true improvement demands the involvement of everyone concerned, including staff and parents.

## **The value of healthy LBPSB relationships**

As stated above, the letters sent by parents and community members played a pivotal role in the development of the recommendations of the TF. This fact indicates the importance of maintaining a good relationship between parents, schools, centres, administration, and students. Thus, the significance of the LBPSB making every effort to involve parents in the functioning of their children’s schools cannot be overstated; neither can the need for parents to accept the challenge and work in full partnership with administrators and teachers. Put succinctly, the door to full and open dialogue has been opened and that door must stay open and be seen to stay open.

## **Diversity, inclusivity and intersectionality**

The students who depend upon LBPSB for their education are from diverse backgrounds. However, it must be borne in mind that diversity does not necessarily equate with inclusion and, above all, LBPSB must be inclusive. Therefore, although the TF looked at five so-called different areas, their intersectionalities were not lost on us. Hence, a particular recommendation, or something similar to it, may be found in more than one section. For example, the intersection between sexuality and gender may result in a single recommendation being employed in both categories. However, that recommendation should be viewed through the lens of the sector in which it is found. That said, in order to adapt the recommendation to the needs of the student, it should be coupled with other categories which serve to identify that specific human. In that manner, the entirety of the person is being addressed rather than merely a segment - as would be the case if only one aspect was being the focus of care.

Furthermore, as far as the many diversities and intersectionalities of the student body is concerned, it must be borne in mind that institutions all over the world are being watched and evaluated by how they treat the different social segments of society and no less than dignity and respect will be accepted. LBPSB has a moral, ethical and societal duty to be part, and indeed a leader, of the change which is necessary. Therefore, their actions must be *real*, and measured by appropriate benchmarks, including the monitoring of outcomes.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the work of the TF; results of the assessment of the documents of LBPSB; paying close attention to the correspondence of parents; and, the resulting recommendations, point to the undeniable fact that as in society at large, the time has come to 'do the right thing'. By exposing itself to this public examination and making no attempt to hinder the work of the TF, LBPSB has indicated its willingness to do what is right for all of its learners. That is to say, students from kindergarten through to adult education. This signifies that they are aware that what they do cannot merely be performative as, from henceforth, they will be closely scrutinized. Such scrutiny will include the wording used when informing students of the availabilities of policies which have a direct impact on their lives. LBPSB must, therefore, make sure to address students in accessible and respectful language. In other words, communication with students must honour their dignity and agency regardless of their genders; sexualities; abilities; race and ethnicities; or religions.

All students are entitled to a safe school environment - an environment which is free from bullying and violence. Similarly, everyone who works within the territory of LBPSB has the right to enjoy the same environment in which no pretext will be accepted as an excuse to violate the rights of others. As one student, referring to LBPSB, stated in a letter to the TF:

*"...it is your responsibility to ensure that every member of your school board feels protected and comfortable."*

It is the hope of the TF that these recommendations will be one of many steps in sustaining such an environment.



# Annex A • Community Resources

## Baie-d'Urfé

**CIUSSS West Island • 514-630-2123**

<https://ciusss-ouestmtl.gouv.qc.ca/en/care-services/west-island-territory/>

**CLSC Lac St-Louis • 514-697-4110**

<https://ciusss-ouestmtl.gouv.qc.ca/contact-localisation/centres-locaux-de-services-communautaires-clsc/clsc-du-lac-saint-louis/>

**West Island Community Resource Centre (CRC) • 514-694-6404**

<https://crcinfo.ca/business-directory-default/friends-for-mental-health-counseling-psychological-intervention/>

## Beaconsfield

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of West Island • 514-538-6100**

<https://westisland.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/>

**West Island Community Resource Centre (CRC) • 514-694-6404**

<https://crcinfo.ca/business-directory-default/friends-for-mental-health-counseling-psychological-intervention/>

**West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped • 514-694-7090**

<http://wiaih.qc.ca/>

**Friends for Mental Health • 514-636-6885**

<https://www.asmfmh.org/en/>

**NOVA West-Island • 514-695-8335**

<https://www.novawi.org/contact>

## DDO

**Action Jeunesse de l'Ouest-de-L'Ile (AJOI) • 514-675-4450** <https://www.ajoi.info/>

**Big Brothers and Big Sisters of West Island • 514-694-6100**

<https://westisland.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/>

**Friends for Mental Health • 514-636-6885**

<https://www.asmfmh.org/en/>

## DDO (continued)

**NOVA West-Island** • 514-695-8335

<https://www.novawi.org/contact>

**West Island Community Resource Centre (CRC)** • 514-694-6404

<https://crcinfo.ca/business-directory-default/friends-for-mental-health-counseling-psychological-intervention/>

**West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped** • 514-694-7090

<http://wiaih.qc.ca/>

**West Island Women's Shelter** • 514-620-4845

## Dorval

**Dorval Community Aid** • 514-633-4100

**Teen Zone - Sarto-Desnoyers Community Centre** • 514-633-4066 (Teen Zone) •

514-633-4000 (SDCC Reception)

**Action Jeunesse de l'Ouest-de-L'Ile (AJOI)** • 514-675-4450

<https://www.ajoi.info/>

**Growing Together** • 514-222-9414 (South area of the West-Island, Dorval, Pointe-Claire, Kirkland, Beaconsfield, Baie d'Urfe, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Senneville)

An organization specializing with children ages 0 to 8. Providing them support and encouraging development in the community with their families.

**\*DORVAL HAS AN EXTENSIVE LIST BREAKING SERVICES DOWN INTO DEFINED CATEGORIES\***

## Listening Services

**Suicide Hotline** • 514-723-4000 • <https://suicideactionmontreal.org/>

**Tel-jeunes** • 1-800-263-2266 • [www.teljeunes.com](http://www.teljeunes.com)

**Telaide** • 514-935-1101 • [www.teljeunes.com](http://www.teljeunes.com)

**Kids Help Phone** • 1-800-668-6868 • [www.jeunessejecoute.ca](http://www.jeunessejecoute.ca)

**Interligne** (Formerly Gay Line) • 514-886-0103 • Text Messaging: 1-888-505-1010

<https://interligne.co/en/>

## Dorval (continued)

### Substance Abuse

**Drugs:** Referral and Help • 514-527-2626 • [www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca](http://www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca)

**Alateen** (Alcoholics Anonymous Family Groups) • 514-866-9803

[www.al-anon.alateen.org/la-alateen](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/la-alateen)

**AA Quebec** • 514-376-9230 • [www.aa-quebec.org](http://www.aa-quebec.org)

**Narcotics Anonymous** • 514-249-0555 • [www.naquebec.org](http://www.naquebec.org)

### Various Problems

**ANEB** (Eating Disorders) • 514-630-0907 • <http://anebquebec.com/>

**Gamblers Anonymous** • 514-484-6666 • [www.gaquebec.org](http://www.gaquebec.org)

**Grief Helpline** • 514-389-1784

**Depressed Anonymous** • 514-278-2130 • [www.ecoute-entraide.org/deprimes-anonymes](http://www.ecoute-entraide.org/deprimes-anonymes)

**Pregnancy Help** • 514-271-0554 • [www.grossesse-secours.org](http://www.grossesse-secours.org)

### Victimization

**Centre for victims of criminal acts (CAVAC)** • 514-744-5048 • [www.cava.qc.ca](http://www.cava.qc.ca)

**Montreal Sexual Assault Centre** • 514-933-9007 • <http://cvasm.org/en/services-ligne-telephonique>

**West Island CALACS** (Sexual Assault) • 514-684-2198 • [www.calacdelouest.ca](http://www.calacdelouest.ca)

## Hudson

### (VERY LITTLE INFORMATION REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES)

Information provided by City of Hudson includes basic social services like fire department, public security. No information provided for mental health services on the City of Hudson website.

<https://hudson.quebec/en/>

No results even upon entering "mental health" in the search bar on the website.

## Kirkland

### (SIMILAR TO HUDSON VERY LITTLE INFORMATION OR ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES)

We see a large market for private resources and counselling. Public health resources seem non-existent.

<https://www.ville.kirkland.qc.ca/>

<https://ciusss-ouestmtl.gouv.qc.ca/en/care-services/>

Kirkland is lumped together with the rest of the boroughs in the West-Island

**CIUSSS West Island** • 514-630-2123

<https://ciusss-ouestmtl.gouv.qc.ca/en/care-services/west-island-territory/>

(This service seems to be the most available and referenced resource in the West-Island)

## Lachine MTL

**ACCESS: Open Minds • 514-639-0650**

1900, rue Notre-Dame, Lachine, Quebec

[https://accessopenminds.ca/our\\_site/dorval-lachine-lasalle-qc-2/](https://accessopenminds.ca/our_site/dorval-lachine-lasalle-qc-2/)

Incredible resource for the Lachine-Dorval-Lasalle area.

Large emphasis on young people and youth mental health.

**VERY GOOD RESOURCE SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC TO ALL SCHOOLS IN THE AREA.**

**Cumulus: Prévention des toxicomanies • 514-634-5774**

C.P. 34054 Galerie Lachine, Lachine, H8S 4H4

Excellent resource for school aged youth dealing with substance related problems.

Point of contact included through schools or by phone.

## Lasalle MTL

**ACCESS: Open Minds • 514-639-0650**

1900, rue Notre-Dame, Lachine, Quebec

[https://accessopenminds.ca/our\\_site/dorval-lachine-lasalle-qc-2/](https://accessopenminds.ca/our_site/dorval-lachine-lasalle-qc-2/)

Incredible resource for the Lachine-Dorval-Lasalle area.

Large emphasis on young people and youth mental health.

**VERY GOOD RESOURCE SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC TO ALL SCHOOLS IN THE AREA.**

**Boys and Girls Club • 514-364-3907**

8600 Hardy Street, H8N 2P5

[www.bgclasalle.com](http://www.bgclasalle.com)

Children and Adolescents.

Access to extracurricular activities, tutoring services and internet access.

**Nutri-centre LaSalle • 514-365-3670**

408-A Lafleur Ave. H8R 3H6

Available to all residents of LaSalle.

Community lunches, workshops for youth.

### LaSalle Multicultural Resource Center

**Population:** Open to everyone

1464 boul. Shevchenko, H8R 2A5

(514) 367-3383

[lmrc\\_community@hotmail.com](mailto:lmrc_community@hotmail.com)

#### **Health services**

Psychosocial support: individual, couple and family therapy, early drug prevention, preservation of family, seniors mentoring, seniors club, pre-teen and teen leadership program. Free or low-cost.

### Phobies-Zéro

**Population:** Open to everyone

(20\$ annual membership)

(514) 276-3105

[www.phobies-zero.qc.ca](http://www.phobies-zero.qc.ca)

#### **Health services**

Mental Health: weekly support and mutual assistance group for people suffering from anxiety, panic attacks, phobias and agoraphobia. Also open to families and loved ones. 10\$ for one visit (if not a member). Help line weekdays from 9AM to 9PM at 1-866-922-0002.

## Pierrefonds-Roxboro MTL

### Friends for Mental Health • 514-636-6885

750 Dawson Avenue, Dorval, QC

[www.asmfmh.org](http://www.asmfmh.org)

FREE, NO CHARGE.

Serves all ages.

Although located in Dorval, this organization offers services to the entire West-Island area and off island. Could be used by all schools through phone contact.

#### CALACS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île

**Population:** Women, 14+

14068 boul. Gouin West, Pierrefonds, H8Z 1Y1

(514) 624-1449

##### **Social Support**

Support services for women who have experienced gender based violence. Groups, emergency support, accompaniment, and individual counselling.

CALACS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île offers specialized support to woman aged 14+\*\*\*

#### West Island Crisis Center

**Population:** Open to everyone

First contact must be made by phone:

(514) 684-6160

##### **Health Services**

Psychosocial support and counselling. Crisis hotline and home visits for support with mental health related issues.

##### **Housing**

Emergency shelter.

West Island Crisis Center emphasizes those dealing with crisis situations.

Offers emergency SHELTERS\*\*\*.

### CLSC de Pierrefonds • 514-626-2572

3800 Gouin Ouest, Pierrefonds, Quebec

### Action jeunesse Ouest-de-l'Île (AJOI) • 514-675-4450

<http://ajoi.info>

Street outreach for West-Island population including psychosocial services, listening and support.

### Growing Together (North area of the West Island, Pierrefonds, Ile-Bizard) • 514-799-1420

<https://enfants05.wixsite.com/grandireensemble>

An organization specializing with children ages 0 to 8.

Providing them support and encouraged development in the community with their families.

### Maison Caracol • 514-545-1977

<https://maisoncaracol.com/>

Organization emphasizing children ages 0-17 to reach their full development and potential.

Emphasis on targeting children living in vulnerable situations.

Offering a tailored and custom approach including medical services and psychosocial services.

### West Island Women's Shelter • 514-620-4845

[www.wiws.ca](http://www.wiws.ca)

Phone services available 24/7.

Free confidential for women and children who are victims of conjugal violence.

## Pincourt

### **Comité Jeunesse La Presqu'île • 514-425-1060**

75, boul. Cardinal-Leger, Pincourt, Quebec

<https://villepincourt.qc.ca/en/recreation-and-culture/social-development/directory-of-community-organizations>

<https://www.facebook.com/comitejeunesselp/>

Pincourt has an extensive list of services in defined categories including Youth, Mental Health, Violence, Intellectual and Physical Disability, Addictions and Others.

### **Le Versant • 450-455-6171, ext. 70657**

<https://www.leversant.org/en/about-us>

Volunteer group focused on the understanding that mental health is best handled in a group setting with multiple angles of support.

### **Le Tournat • 450-371-4090 or 1-833-371-4090 (free of charge)**

414 Salaberry Ouest, Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Quebec

[www.letournant.org](http://www.letournant.org)

Phone line for immediate crisis and suicide prevention offered 24/7.

### **Arc-En-Ciel Vaudreuil-Soulanges • 450-424-7006**

60 rue de l'église, Vaudreuil-Dorion, Quebec

<https://www.facebook.com/Arcenciel-vaudreuil-soulanges-677180929108566/>

Non-profit mental health service, community organization.

### **Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel (C.A.L.A.C.S.) La Vigie**

450-371-4222

Service offering help to those victim of sexual assault.

### **Centre de femmes La Moisson - FOR WOMEN • 514-453-8720**

321 rue Grand Boulevard, Ile-Perrot, Quebec

<http://www.centredefemmeslamoisson.com/>

Free services offering talk therapy and listening with or without appointment for women.

Workshops emphasizing personal development for women, collective cultural mediation.

### **Parents d'enfants handicapés avec difficultés d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage (PEHDAA)**

450-424-7505

<https://pehdaa.ca/>

Organization offering support to parents and families for those dealing with physical disabilities.



## Pointe-Claire

**West Island Women's Centre • 514-695-8529**

11 Rodney Avenue, Pointe-Claire, Quebec

**West Island Association for Intellectually Handicapped (W.I.A.I.H) • 514-694-7090**

111 Donegani Avenue, Pointe-Claire, Quebec

**Friends for Mental Health • 514-636-6885**

<https://www.asmfmh.org/en/>

**FREE, NO CHARGE.**

Serves all ages. Although located in Dorval, this organization offers services to the entire West-Island area and off island. Could be used by all schools through phone contact.

## Saint-Télesphore

<http://saint-telesphore.com/>

Because of the small population of Saint-Telesphore (less than 1000 individuals) any of the off island services to the West could be included as a resource available to Saint-Telesphore.

## Saint-Lazare

**CENTRE D'ACTION BÉNÉVOLE L'ACTUEL • 450-455-3331**

88 Adèle Street, Vaudreuil-Dorion, Montérégie, Quebec, J7V 1S7 • [www.lactual.org](http://www.lactual.org)

Non-profit organization offering food, clothing, books and other resources. Overall just a volunteer organization focused on helping disadvantaged individuals and families.

**LE PONT BRIDGING FOOD BANK OF HUDSON • 450-458-5318**

\*ADDRESS not provided for reasons of confidentiality Food bank for individuals and families in need.

**Children in abusive situations. You fear for the safety of a child?**

450-679-0140 or 1-800-361-5310 (toll-free)

**Le Tournat • 450-371-4090 or 1-833-371-4090 (free of charge)**

414 Salaberry Ouest, Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Quebec

[www.letournant.org](http://www.letournant.org)

Phone line for immediate crisis and suicide prevention offered 24/7.

**Psychosocial support hotline offered to families • 450-218-0561, ext. 1**

<https://www.maisondlafamillevs.ca/>

Listening, tips and support offered in both languages.

**Suicide Prevention hotline • 1-866-APPELLE (1-866-277-3553)**

## Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue

**Bread Basket Lac St-Louis** • 514-894-5850

<https://www.corbeilledepain.com/>

Access to healthy foods for those in need.

**Friends for Mental Health** • 514-636-6885

<https://www.asmfmh.org/en/>

FREE, NO CHARGE.

Serves all ages. Although located in Dorval, this organization offers services to the entire West-Island area and off island. Could be used by all schools through phone contact.

**NOVA West-Island** • 514-695-8335

<https://www.novawi.org/contact>

**Richelieu Club** • 514-708-7861

<https://www.ville.sainte-anne-de-bellevue.qc.ca/en/264/let-s-help-our-community#target-club-richelieu>

Primary mission of helping children and youth.

**West Island Community Resources Centre** • 514-694-6404

<http://www.crcinfo.ca/>

## Vaudreuil-Dorion

**Comité Jeunesse La Presqu'Île** • 514-425-1060 • [comitejeunesselapresquile.org](http://comitejeunesselapresquile.org)

Organization focused on improving the living conditions of adolescents living in the Vaudreuil-Soulanges area.

**Club Richelieu Dorion-Vaudreuil** • 450-455-0991

Francophone organization for personal development, focused on youth.

**Club Optimiste de Vaudreuil-Dorion and Club Octogone L'Envol**

[optimistevaudreuil-dorion.com](http://optimistevaudreuil-dorion.com)

Organization promoting the idea of volunteerism and community-based activities.

**Friends for Mental Health** • 514-636-6885

<https://www.asmfmh.org/en/>

FREE, NO CHARGE.

Serves all ages. Although located in Dorval, this organization offers services to the entire West-Island area and off island. Could be used by all schools through phone contact.

**NOVA West-Island** • 514-695-8335

<https://www.novawi.org/contact>

**CENTRE D'ACTION BÉNÉVOLE L'ACTUEL** • 450-455-3331

88 Adèle Street, Vaudreuil-Dorion, Montérégie, Quebec, J7V 1S7 • [www.lactual.org](http://www.lactual.org)

Non-profit organization offering food, clothing, books and other resources. Overall just a volunteer organization focused on helping disadvantaged individuals and families.

## Verdun MTL

### **CASA CAFI • 514-844-3340**

4741 de Verdun Street, H4G 1M9

<https://www.facebook.com/casacafiorganisme/>

Open to all, especially immigrant families. Offers activities, immigration information, language courses, social support, family services.

### **Club Optimiste Verdun inc. • 438-886-2840**

4061 Wellington Street, H4G 1V6

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Club-Optimiste-Verdun-Inc-242016296491/>

Youth oriented activities, school supplies, and clothing for back to school. Servicing youth and families.

### **Centre des femmes de Verdun • 514-767-0384**

4080 Wellington Street, Office 203, H4G 1V4

[cfember@qc.aira.com](mailto:cfember@qc.aira.com)

Offers women, activities and services. Workshops and support groups. Social support. Library, English and French language exchange.

### **Project Pal • 514-767-4701**

861 de l'Église Street, H4G 2N3

<https://www.projetpal.com/>

Offering service to people living with mental health challenges and their families, such as housing and social support.



**FINAL REPORT**  
**JUNE 2021**

*of the*

Task Force on  
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion  
of The Lester B. Pearson School Board



*Thank you.*

