Ontario Institute for Education Leadership
L'Institut de leadership en éducation de l'Ontario

Ontario Leaders Collaborating for Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being
La collaboration des leaders en Ontario assure la réussite, l'équité et le bien-être des élèves.

DEVELOPING ANTI-RACISM AWARENESS

INTRODUCTION

Ontario school boards have as a current and urgent priority ensuring that their leaders have the awareness, the deep understanding, and the expertise to address all forms of racism and oppression in their schools and districts. They are cognizant of the struggles of boards whose failure to address issues of anti-Black racism and other forms of racism have resulted in a loss of public confidence and in turn the imposition of external interventions and an imposed plan of action. They are listening and paying close attention to the views and voices of their staff, students, parent and community groups. They recognize that the journey to equitable education presents seemingly insurmountable challenges that their school and system leaders must confront urgently.

In support of these challenges, the Ontario Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) has developed this resource which is intended to help school and system leaders acknowledge and embrace the tensions involved in disrupting all forms of racism and oppression. It calls on them to engage in the necessary courageous conversations, thoughtful reflection and dialogue, and action planning that results in elimination of racism and oppression in teaching, leading and learning. It offers evidence-based advice from expert researchers and thought leaders. It is a preliminary work that can readily be integrated in professional learning resources and supports that districts are currently offering school and system leaders.

This resource consists of selected readings that offer interventions and tools that will help leaders integrate anti-racism and anti-oppression understandings and enactments in their daily work and practice. These readings provide a springboard for learning that is enhanced by an ongoing process of reading, reflection, and discussion that together will:

- Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as a central stance in leaders' everyday work.
- Provide school and system leaders with preliminary resources and support to deepen their understanding of anti-racism.
- Serve as an entry point that fosters reflection, dialogue, and action, leading to continuous strengthening of equitable leadership.

This resource will provide leaders with a suggested approach for having professional conversations and engaging in learning experiences focused on how inequities, colonialization and forms of oppression are perpetuated across a range of educational contexts in schools and districts and considering how to eliminate them.

WHAT THIS RESOURCE INCLUDES:
- Selected readings;
- A suggested approach for reflection, discussion, and application of each reading;
- A suggested culminating approach for reflection on the learning across all readings considered as a whole, and action steps; and
- A glossary of terms to help develop a common language for discussing anti-racism and anti-colonization.

READINGS THAT FOCUS ON ANTI-RACISM:

Reading 1: [Challenging Anti-Black Racism in Everyday Teaching, Learning, and Leading: From Theory to Practice](#) by Ann Lopez & Gaëtane Jean-Marie, 2021.

<u>Summary:</u>
This article focuses on research about Black educators' lived experiences in Canada and the United States. It examines how anti-blackness and anti-black racism is manifested in schooling spaces through teaching, learning, and leadership. The authors draw on Critical Race Theory (CRT) to support, frame, and theorize their research and thinking about race and racism in education and schooling and to inform analysis of their findings. Based on this research they offer a framework that educators can use in everyday practice to confront and disrupt racism. This framework, as described in the article, is centered on four key tenants: *Name*, *Own*, *Frame*, and *Sustain* (NOFS).
        See Figure 1 Anti-racism framework (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021), page 58
In *Naming* anti-Black racism, practitioners must come to understand the conceptualization of antiblackness and anti-Black racism and how these are manifested in everyday schooling practices. Educators must examine their positionality, engage in self-reflection, and come to understand what they need to learn and unlearn.

In *Owning* the issue, educators place themselves in a position to examine not only their silence and complicity, but that of others. Owning it means claiming responsibly for agency and acting upon that agency individually and with others. Once educators own the issue they begin to think about a) how they are complicit, and b) possible actions.

In *Framing*, educators are intentional and purposeful in their actions. They begin to look for spaces in their work to actively challenge anti-Black racism. This includes the school milieu, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, school discipline, their approach when dealing with members of the Black community and so forth. Framing requires moving beyond performative actions that do not lead to lasting and sustainable change in the lives and experiences of students.

Sustaining requires collective effort as no one person can undo four hundred years of oppression by themselves in a semester or a term. While dislodging anti- Black racism from education and schooling is urgent, it is still a journey—longer for some, shorter for others. On this journey it is not enough to prove injustice, people must see how they themselves are being unjust (Soltani, 2017).

Suggested Approach to Learning From this Reading:
1. On your own, read the article in its entirety recording questions and comments as you read.
   Ask yourself, what surprises you, puzzles you, worries you?
2. With others, talk about what you've read and notes you've made to deepen your understanding.
3. Identify issues related to anti-Black racism that stand out for you in your context.
4. Choose one of the issues that you have identified and using the Name, Own, Frame and Sustain (NOFS) framework described above record your thoughts as you work through the issue.
5. Share the results of your NOFS process with a partner and together draft a proposed plan of action for addressing the issue.
6. Invite feedback on your proposed plan of action.
7. Repeat the NOFS process with other priority issues you have identified with the goal of making it an integral dimension of your equitable leadership practice and anti-racism stance.
8. Extend the learning by reviewing the following Fact Sheet ***How can student success be reimagined through an equity and anti-oppression lens?*** by Ann Lopez and Rachael Kalaba. It identifies equity and anti-oppressive practices that you will find useful in addressing key issues in supporting student success.

Reading 2: [Reforming for Racial Justice: A Narrative Synthesis and Critique of the Literature on District Reform in Ontario Over 25 Years by Vidya Shah](#), Gisele Cuglievan-Mindreau, and Joseph Flessa, 2022.

Summary:
This reading analyzes literature on school district reform that has been conducted over the last 25 years in Ontario and describes how this research has supported districts in

responding to racism in schooling and society. It critiques the extent to which school district reform has addressed ongoing and growing concerns of racism and anti-black racism. The authors use Critical Race Theory (CRT) to frame their understanding of district reform. In doing so, they identify four approaches to district reform literature in Ontario: *the politics of race evasion*, *the politics of illusory equity*, *the politics of representation and recognition*, and *the politics of anti-racist resistance*. In recognizing the limitations of the very notion of reform, they offer a fifth approach, *the politics of regeneration.*

The approaches are illustrated in the diagram below and are described in the following:

1. The **Politics of Race Evasion**: There is a complete absence of analysis of race and racism in this approach. The primary focus is on technocratic changes and within-district factors as levers for change.

2. The **Politics of Illusory Equity**: The role of districts in this approach is to identify and close gaps in standardized test scores based on limited markers of identity. There is a movement from within district factors to beyond districts factors. Local representation and parent and community voice in challenging policies, funding procedures, and power structures within districts are emphasized. There is lack of acknowledgement about the ways in which intersecting oppressions determine how problems are defined, how conflicts are framed, and whose voices are heard or denied.

3. The **Politics of Regeneration and recognition**: There is a shift from neoliberal and new managerial approaches to student achievement to critiques of neoliberal framings of equity from critical stances, such as the harmful distinction between excellence and equity, but often in the absence of race analysis. There is a commitment to identifying and closing a variety of gaps in student experiences, well-being, and engagement, disaggregated by many more facets of identity, including race, gender, and sexuality. There is also a focus on building relationships with community partners and families, ensuring that multiple, often excluded voices are included in decision-making processes. However, while there is a focus on power and larger socio-economic and historical contexts, structural racism and anti-racism tend to be erased in conversations of equity and social justice.

4. The **Politics of Anti-Racist Resistance**: Race, racialization, and anti-racism are central to notions of reform. There is a focus on dismantling harmful structures that disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, and racialized students and on creating systems and alternative spaces that support the learning and well-being

of these students. District leaders take an active stance against powerful constituencies and influential players intent on perpetuating the status quo. The authors provide a framework that showcases transformative and affirmative approaches to reform.

5. The **Politics of Regeneration**: In the politics of regeneration, districts are cultural and political mechanisms that raise the collective consciousness of the communities within and beyond the district. Similar to the politics of anti-racist resistance, harmful structures are dismantled, and new systems are created. In addition, learning and action happen alongside communities. The district is a set of relationships in which conflict and multiple and contradictory truths are seen as generative opportunities.

Figure 2 approaches to school district reform (Shah et al., 2022)
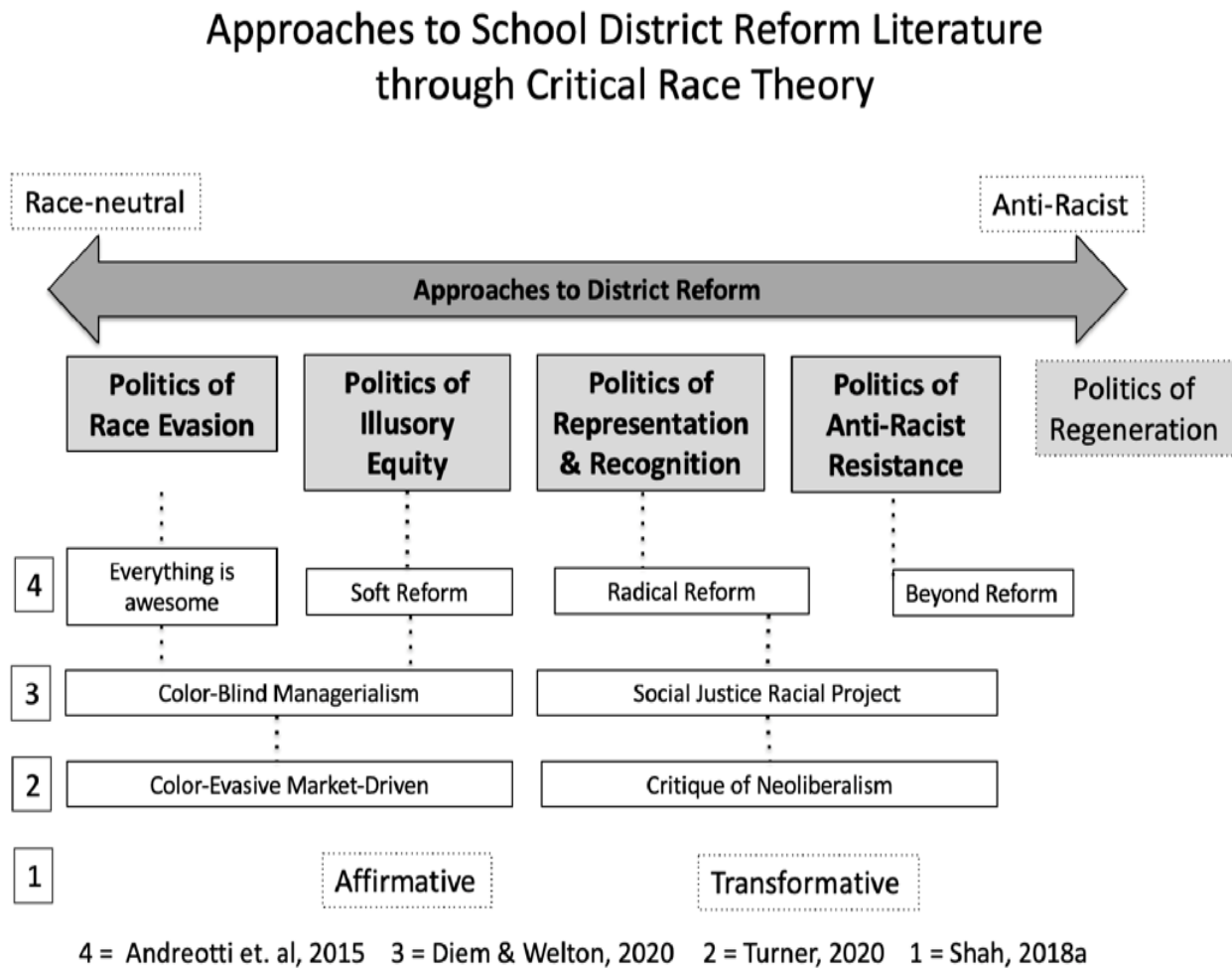
Suggested Approach to Learning From this Reading:

1. On your own, read the article in its entirety recording questions and comments as you read. Ask yourself: What surprises you, puzzles you, worries you?
2. With others, talk about what you've read and notes you've made to deepen your understanding and to determine the relevance to your current role and context.
3. How can you use your increased awareness and understanding of district reform in Ontario over the past 25 years to influence reforms in your context? What are some small wins that you can propose that will confront and disrupt racism and inequalities at the school or system level?
4. What are opportunities that you have to develop critical consciousness among your colleagues that will promote working and learning environments that affirm identities, experiences and histories?

Glossary of Terms
Several definitions of the terms below exist. However, the ILE will rely on the definitions presented to ensure common language and understanding.
The definitions presented have been established following several readings.

For more information on definitions, visit https://www.oaith.ca/assets/library/Anti-Racism-and-Anti-Oppression-Definition-Glossary-List-Final.docx.pdf and

https://www.crrf-fcrr.ca/en/resources/glossary-a-terms-en-gb-1

Power & Privilege Definitions

INSTITUTIONAL POWER: The ability or official authority to decide what is best for others. The ability to determine who will have access to resources. The capacity to exercise control over others.

PREJUDICE: A judgment or opinion formed on insufficient grounds before facts are known or in disregard of facts that contradict it. Biases are learned and can be unlearned.

STEREOTYPE: An exaggerated or distorted belief that attributes characteristics to members of a particular group, simplistically lumping them together and refusing to acknowledge differences among group members.

OPPRESSION: The combination of prejudice and institutional power creates a system that discriminates against some groups (often called "target groups") and benefits other groups (often called "dominant groups"). These systems are racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism. These systems enable

dominant groups to control target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to essential healthcare, education, employment, and housing.

Four Levels of Oppression:
- **Personal:** Values, Beliefs, Feelings
- **Interpersonal:** Actions, Behaviors, Language
- **Institutional:** Rules, Policies, Procedures
- **Cultural:** Beauty, Truth, Right

PRIVILEGE: Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, favours, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of target groups. In the United States, privilege is granted to people who have membership in one or more of these social identity groups:
- White people;
- Non-disabled people;
- Heterosexuals;
- Cisgender people
- Males;
- Christians;
- Middle or owning class people;
- Middle-aged people;
- English-speaking people
- Citizens

Privilege is characteristically invisible to people who have it. People in dominant groups often believe that they have earned the privileges they enjoy or that everyone could have access to these privileges if only they worked to earn them. Privileges are unearned, and they are granted to people in the dominant groups whether they want those privileges or not, regardless of their stated intent.

Unlike targets of oppression, people in dominant groups are frequently unaware that they are members of the dominant group due to the privilege of seeing themselves as persons rather than stereotypes.

TARGETS OF OPPRESSION: Targets of oppression are members of social identity groups that are disenfranchised, exploited, and victimized in various ways by agents of oppression and the agent's systems or institutions. Targets of oppression are subject to containment. Their choices and movements are restricted and limited, are seen and treated as expendable and replaceable, without an individual identity apart from their group, and are compartmentalized into narrowly defined roles.

Targets of oppression are people subjected to exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Targets of oppression are kept in their place by the agent of oppression's ideology, which supports oppression by denying that it exists and blames the conditions of oppression on the targets' actions.

Targets of oppression have fewer "life chances" or benefits due to their membership in a particular social group. As an example, there is a higher likelihood that African American males will be arrested than Caucasian males; there is a greater chance that males will have a higher salary than females, and there is a higher probability that persons using a wheelchair for mobility will have fewer job opportunities than non-disabled people.

AGENTS OF OPPRESSION: Agents of oppression are members of the dominant social groups in the United States, privileged by birth or acquisition, which knowingly or unknowingly exploit and reap unfair advantages over groups that are targets of oppression. Agents of oppression are also trapped by institutionalized oppression that benefits them and is confined to roles and prescribed behaviours. In United States culture, agents have the power to define the "norm" for what is accurate, and they see themselves as average or proper. In contrast, targets are likely labelled deviant, evil, abnormal, substandard, or defective.

OPPRESSION AND POWER DIFFERENTIAL CHARTS: Look over this chart and locate yourself on both sides. Where are you a target of oppression? Where are you an agent of oppression? How do you feel about this list? Are there surprises for you?

It is much more challenging for many of us to identify and describe how we experience the world as agents of oppression because these characteristics are privileged. A privilege often operates in an unconscious, invisible manner. We believe that part of becoming anti-racist allies involves exploring and understanding how privilege has worked in our lives.

Think about your behaviour when introducing yourself to new acquaintances or groups…what aspects of your target or agent status do you share as part of your introduction? Why or why not?

RACE: Someone has said that "race is a pigment of our imagination." That is a clever way of saying that race is an invention. It arbitrarily divides humankind into different groups to keep some on top, some at the bottom, some in, and some out. And its design has evident historical roots, namely, colonialism. "Race is an arbitrary socio-biological classification created by Europeans during the time of worldwide colonial expansion, to assign human worth and social status, using themselves as the model of

humanity, to legitimize white power and white skin privilege" (*Crossroads-Interfaith Ministry for Social Justice).*

To acknowledge that race is an arbitrary historical invention does not mean that it can be easily dispensed with as a reality in people's lives. To recognize race as an invention of colonialism is not the same as pretending to be colour blind or declaring, "I don't notice people's race!" Our world has been ordered and structured based on skin colour, and that oppressive ordering and structuring is RACISM.

RACISM: Racism is a system in which one race maintains supremacy over another race through a set of attitudes, behaviours, social structures, and institutional power. Racism is a "system of structured dis-equality where the goods, services, rewards, privileges, and benefits of the society are available to individuals according to their presumed membership in" particular racial groups (Barbara Love, 1994. *Understanding Internalized Oppression).* A person of any race can have prejudices about other races. Still, only members of the dominant social group can exhibit racism because racism is prejudice, plus the institutional power to enforce it.

ALLY: An ally is a person whose commitment to dismantling oppression is reflected in a willingness to do the following:
- Educate oneself about oppression.
- Learn from and listen to people who are targets of oppression.
- Examine and challenge one's prejudices, stereotypes, and assumptions.
- Work through feelings of guilt, shame, and defensiveness to understand what is beneath them and what needs to be healed.
- Learn and practice the skills of challenging oppressive remarks, behaviours, policies, and institutional structures.
- Act collaboratively with members of the target group to dismantle oppression.

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION: The process whereby people in the target group make oppression internal and personal by believing that the lies, prejudices, and stereotypes about them are true. Members of target groups exhibit internalized oppression when they alter their attitudes, behaviours, speech, and self-confidence to reflect the stereotypes and norms of the dominant group. Internalized oppression can create low self-esteem, self-doubt, and even self-loathing. It can also be projected outward as fear, criticism, and distrust of one's target group members.

RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE: Relationship (or domestic) violence is a pattern of power and control that one person exercises over another in an ongoing, intimate relationship. Many tactics can be used, including emotional, physical or sexual abuse; isolation; economic control; threats; mistreatment of animals; and using children.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: Sexual assault includes any sexual conduct, or sexual contact that is non-consensual, forced, or coerced when the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity or because of their youth.

RAPE: Rape is defined as non-consensual, forced, or coerced sexual penetration against the victim's will or when the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity or because of their youth.

GENDER: Refers to those rules, norms, customs, and practices by which biologically associated differences between the male and female of the human species are translated into socially constructed differences between men and women, boys and girls, which give them unequal value, opportunities and life chances.

Definitions were abridged from:
© Leaven 2003 Doing Our Own Work: A Seminar for Anti-Racist White Women
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