

CBE CARES

Fall 2021

Progress Report

learning | [as unique](#) | as every student



Calgary Board
of Education



CBE CARES: Fall 2021 Progress Report

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Foreword

The Calgary Board of Education is committed to creating inclusive learning and work environments. Our schools and workplaces must promote welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe environments for students, families and staff.

There is no place for racism or discrimination in the CBE. As a public school system that welcomes all, we are dedicated to success for all students — regardless of race, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other factors.

We acknowledge racism exists in society and in our schools and workplaces. Eliminating racism and promoting inclusivity is our collective responsibility. That's why we created CBE CARES: The Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports.

CBE CARES is more than a one-time initiative. It is a commitment to embedding inclusive practices into the very fabric of our school system.

At the start of CBE CARES, we invited those who had experienced racism and discrimination to come together in listening sessions. We heard from students, employees, parents, caregivers, Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers and community members. Some of the stories were tough to hear. While we cannot change the past, we can work toward a better future.

I am grateful to Dr. Marie Delorme for leading us through the listening sessions and compiling the “What We Heard” report. I am also grateful to the CBE CARES Advisory Council members and Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers for their commitment and contribution to this important work. I also appreciate the bravery and the candour of everyone who participated in the conversations.

We will continue to listen with open hearts and open minds.

Addressing racism and discrimination is ongoing work. It takes more than one conversation with staff, students, and community. We will move forward with purpose while being thoughtful about the impact of our actions.

Thank you for your commitment to positive change and success for all in the CBE.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Usih".

Christopher Usih
Chief Superintendent of Schools





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Land Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the traditional territories and oral practices of the Blackfoot Nations, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai. We also acknowledge the Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda First Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

Summary

The purpose of this Progress Report is to provide an update and the context for the “What We Heard” report that summarizes the results of our CBE CARES (Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports) Advisory Council meetings and listening sessions with parents, guardians and staff. It also outlines the actions taken to date and next steps for CBE CARES.

Overview

In June 2020, the CBE introduced CBE CARES: Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports (CARES) to advance equity, anti-racism and inclusion within the CBE. It is based on the belief and commitment that every student should have the opportunity to succeed personally and academically regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances.

An important foundational step in addressing this critical issue was to hear the experiences of students, parents, guardians and staff.

An external expert, Dr. Marie Delorme, was retained to facilitate meetings with an internal advisory council (including students and staff) and to host listening sessions with parents, guardians and staff to hear their perspectives on racism, discrimination and other barriers to inclusion in our schools and workplaces. Members of the CBE Indigenous Education Team also held one-on-one meetings with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers to seek their guidance.

Attached to this Progress Report is Dr. Delorme’s report — “What We Heard” — during those sessions. The report reflects the perspectives of the parents, caregivers, students, staff, community members, Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers who generously gave their time, shared their stories, and provided potential next steps for consideration by CBE.

In these sessions, we listened to the voices of the participants, but we did not engage in discussion to determine the full circumstances that may have given rise to the concern.





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We did not attempt to correct any misunderstandings or lack of awareness of policies, practices and actions already in place. We did not want their voices to be constrained by our questions or clarifications during the sessions.

Some of the stories and perspectives shared in the report are difficult to read. We, as a system, work hard to create safe, caring and inclusive learning and working environments. However, the participants made it clear that there are many ways we can do better. Although it is uncomfortable, we must acknowledge that racism and discrimination do happen in our schools and workplaces. Even one incident of racism or discrimination is one too many, and we must, as a system, do better.

We recognize the investment so many are making in advancing equity and anti-racism within our system and we are grateful for the support and guidance of the Elder Advisory Council, the Chief Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, and the CBE CARES Advisory Council to help advance this important work. We are also incredibly grateful to staff, students, and parents and guardians for embarking on this journey to ensure success for all the students we serve.

We also recognize that the vast majority of staff, students and parents and guardians are committed to ensuring that the CBE is free of racism and discrimination and there was praise during the sessions for all the good work that does happen daily in CBE schools.

Racism and discrimination exist in society, and our schools and workplaces are part of society. Eradicating racism and discrimination in all forms is our collective responsibility. As a public education system we are uniquely positioned to influence the future.

Literature Review

Attached to the "What We Heard" report is a literature review prepared by experts and colleagues at the University of Calgary in relation to anti-racism, inclusion and equity in school jurisdictions across Canada and elsewhere. The literature review helps ensure that CBE is informed of current and emerging issues that are relevant to our local context.

The information will also help shape our strategies to advance anti-racism, equity and inclusion within the CBE.





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First Actions

The CBE senior leadership team has reviewed the “What We Heard” report and existing CBE policies and practices, to determine how best to proceed in a manner that ensures advancing equity and inclusion is part of the fabric of the CBE, and not just a time-limited initiative.

The “What We Heard” report highlights two initial steps:

Name it. Publicly announce that the voices of students, parents, guardians, staff, community members, Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers have been heard; acknowledge that racism and discrimination are real barriers to an inclusive and equitable environment.

Commit to action. Publicly share new initiatives specifically designed to address racism and discrimination. Be open and transparent about the fundamental principals and values of the CBE — that these are non-negotiable, and that racism and discrimination will not be tolerated

Senior leadership agrees wholeheartedly with the calls to action. We will continue to reinforce that the CBE will not tolerate racism or any form of discrimination.

As a public school system that welcomes all, we are committed to success for all students — regardless of race, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other factors. These are protected rights under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Alberta Human Rights Act*. The *Education Act* also makes a commitment to equity and inclusion for all. Everyone is entitled to these protections under the law. As important as the legal requirements are, we need to do this to ensure success for all students, no exceptions.

The report groups suggestions into 10 themes, including Communications, Policies and Training and Development. Some of the suggestions are fully within the CBE’s control, such as providing professional learning to support staff in these areas. Others are partially within our control such as curriculum, where we can not change the curriculum but we can design frameworks and supports for teachers. Some suggestions are outside our control such as adding social workers to each school.

Among the things suggested in the report to help the CBE to be successful with this work was: “Develop and implement consistent, deliberate plans focused on racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all schools.”

It is with that suggestion in mind that we have determined that our next steps need to focus in areas that are foundational to success and that can be incorporated into “the work we do daily” and that can not be dismissed as “one-off” initiatives. It is also work that can begin to be put into practice immediately. It is important to be focused on doing a few things well and build from there.





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We will also ask our staff to consider as they engage students and parents and guardians, and take actions how the suggestions from the report may inform their ongoing work.

Key Areas of Focus

We have determined that the key areas of focus for the next phase of CBE CARES, based on the experiences and suggestions contained in the “What We Heard” report and informed by other system data, are:

- Naming and acknowledging racism and discrimination, reporting and taking action
- Professional development
- Organizational policies and practices

1. Naming and acknowledging racism and discrimination, reporting and taking action

As noted above, we have been consistent in our communications that we will not tolerate racism, bullying, harassment and discrimination of persons based on race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, cultural background or disability. It is also important to recognize that intent does not negate impact; language and actions matter. For example using a racist word, even if the intention is to explain its impact, does not negate the harm it can cause to individual students, staff or family members who hear it.

Everyone plays a role in supporting an inclusive environment in all our schools and workplaces. We expect employees to act and not to ignore incidences of racism, harassment or discrimination.

We must support one another in calling out racism, harassment or discrimination and reporting it through the appropriate channels. In the listening sessions, we heard the desire for us to “name it” and acknowledge that racism and discrimination are real barriers to an inclusive and equitable environment.

Two things are key to living up to those expectations. The first is ensuring that staff have the knowledge and tools needed to address issues of racism and discrimination. Through the listening sessions and meetings of the CBE CARES Advisory Council, we heard that many staff did not feel properly prepared to take on what can be difficult issues. Information on how we will support them is outlined in the next section on professional development.





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The second is ensuring that the CBE has mechanisms in place for addressing allegations of racism and discrimination. In the section that follows on policies, more information is provided on the policies and processes that are in place to support addressing allegations for both students and staff. The CBE takes these matters seriously and we have and will continue to take appropriate action.

2. Professional development

Professional development is one of the main themes that emerged from our listening sessions. Participants told us that education and training is vital to creating common understanding in our learning and work communities and equipping individuals to be able to act. Embracing diversity can only make our organization stronger and make a positive impact on student success.

One message from an Indigenous Elder is particularly instructive here:

“Don’t fall apart when the community approaches you to talk about and deal with racism; come from a place of knowledge and expertise.”

For CBE educators, school support staff and service unit staff, the professional development will help to ensure they have the knowledge and confidence to engage in challenging conversations about racism and discrimination and take action if necessary.

We have already started professional development for CBE employees this fall. As an example, on October 18, the CBE held its first system-wide Indigenous Education Professional Learning Day in support of the CBE Indigenous Education Holistic Lifelong Learning Framework.

All CBE staff from schools and service units were invited to participate in a full day of building their foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit as we work to acknowledge and support the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s 94 Calls to Action.

The day was very successful. The learning plans and the survey results are being reviewed to determine next steps.

Additional professional development and learning opportunities will be embedded in the implementation of the newly published Literacy and Mathematics Frameworks — each of which require the use of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy and resources.

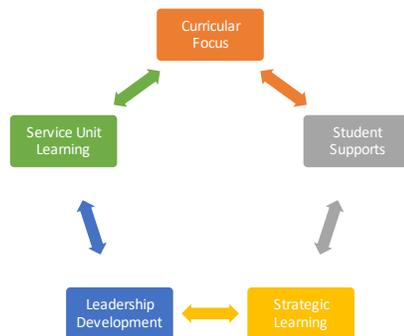




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We use a range of professional learning opportunities to engage certificated and non-certificated staff in order to further the understanding of anti-racism, diversity and inclusion in the CBE.

These opportunities (see graphic) may vary based on system and school needs, but reflect the following:



- **Leadership development**
- **Champion sessions**
(each school identifies a lead teacher)
- **Recorded webinars**
- **Professional Learning Communities**
(structure within schools)
- **Communities of Practice**
(structure across schools)
- **Community Learning Opportunities**
(vetted programs/resources available to schools to select from based on school context)

The CBE is also leveraging its partnership with the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) local to support a professional learning series for school leaders through system leadership and area meetings focused on developing cultural competency and inclusion. In addition, we are working with the ATA local to support access to professional learning resources for teachers' that are accessible on-demand and focused on developing cultural competency and inclusion.

3. CBE's policies and practices: visibility, adherence and review

The CBE has many solid policies and procedures that provide written guidance for day-to-day operations and that help shape our organizational culture. However, it is clear from the "What We Heard" report that families and some staff members have limited visibility into or knowledge of these CBE policies and how to take action.

The expectation is that staff are knowledgeable about the full range of CBE policies and practices that support welcoming, caring, safe, and respectful learning and work environments. We continue to share this expectation with leaders for them to build understanding with staff. The professional learning outlined above will be supportive of building this knowledge and supporting effective action based on it, as will our ongoing commitment to "Name It" and take action.

It is also important that we continue to emphasize that everyone deserves to learn and work in an environment that is free from discrimination, consistent with the [Alberta Human Rights Act](#) and the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#).





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Within our own organization, the CBE has specific policies and related practices to address anti-racism, discrimination, equity and inclusion. Those include, but are not limited to:

- [AR 6031: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Work Environments](#)
- [AR 6005: Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [AR 6006: Progressive Student Discipline](#)
- [Guidelines for Attending to Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation in our Schools](#)
- [AR 4027: Employee Code of Conduct](#)
- [AR 4038: Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination](#)
- [AR 4080: Workplace Violence](#)

We will continue to raise the profile of the policies and guidance documents we have in place. Our goal is to help staff understand and connect with our policies so we can better work together using common language and understanding. We will also continue to highlight these important policies to students and families.

Included in the “What We Heard” report was the suggestion that our policies must include consequences for violating them. Indeed, all of our policies do include consequences for violations. In the case of staff, this can include discipline up to and including termination. For students, this can include suspension or, in severe cases, expulsion. We will continue to apply the appropriate consequences for violation of these policies. However, it would not be appropriate for us to provide public notice of individual actions.

As we work to ensure that our policies are better understood and used more effectively, we will identify where gaps may exist in either the policies or the processes for their implementation and whether further review and revisions are required.

As part of this work, we will continue to analyze best practices to address anti-racism, equity and inclusion within a school board context to support actionable strategies and recommendations. In addition, we will leverage the competencies outlined in the [Teaching Quality Standard](#) and [Leadership Quality Standard to further support this work](#).

Our analysis will consider CBE’s accountabilities to deliver education services as defined in the [Education Act](#) and Alberta Education [Guide to Education](#). We must be mindful of what is within the CBE’s responsibility and control and what is within the responsibility of the provincial government, such as the curriculum.





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Other work underway to advance equity and anti-racism within our system.

While CBE CARES has brought a focus to this work, there are many examples of positive work already underway including the excellent work of the Indigenous Education Team, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity team, Inclusive Education team, Diversity and Learning Support Advisors and our Core Curriculum team who are identifying ways to include supportive content in our learning frameworks.

The CBE also has the support and guidance of the Elder Advisory Council, the Chief Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, and the CBE CARES Advisory Council to help advance this important work. We are also fortunate to have excellent community partners working alongside us.

This work is also supported throughout the [CBE Education Plan](#), through both the actions contained in the plan and in the collection and analysis of a variety of measures including surveys of students and specific actions related to Indigenous Learners, English Language Learners and formal staff complaints.





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Future Steps

As the graphic below highlights, addressing issues of racism and discrimination is ongoing work that will continue to be a focus for the CBE for months and years to come. This Progress Report has highlighted the first steps of the “Act” phase.

CBE CARES (Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports)
Committed to Equity and Inclusion for Everyone



In the next phase, Grow and Adjust, we anticipate more work will be done on the collection and use of enhanced demographic data for students to enable us to know our students and shift our practice. Similar data sets for staff will enable CBE to review hiring and selection practices for both new hires and internal promotions to ensure that they are inclusive.

The actions described above will position us to identify the necessary data, how we can effectively use it and what areas we may need to focus on — as we look to enhance our existing practices. It is important to recognize that there are many steps required to even begin to collect data, including issues of privacy.

As we continue to move forward with this work, we will refer back to the suggestions from the “What We Heard” report to help determine the effectiveness of our actions and where we may need to focus our efforts in the future.

We will also monitor the effectiveness of the professional development that has been provided to ensure that staff members are building capacity to address issues of racism and discrimination. We will also examine the various learning resources that are provided to support this work to ensure that they are meeting our needs.





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Future Consultation

It will be important to continue to hear the voices of students, families, staff and communities. We will be continuing with our internal CBE CARES Advisory Committee for the 2021-22 school year, with the next meeting to take place in the spring of 2022.

We will also continue to seek guidance from the Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers and from our students through the Chief Superintendent's Advisory Council and from families and communities.

Addressing racism and discrimination is our collective responsibility. Everyone has a role to play — staff, students, parents, caregivers, volunteers, and the entire community.

If we come to the table with open hearts and minds, and in a supportive way, we are confident that change is possible. Excellent work is happening in our schools and across the district to support student learning and well-being. Even in these challenging times, staff continue to demonstrate care, compassion, and resiliency in service to students and families.

The “What We Heard” report tells us that all of our stakeholders are prepared to do the work to address racism and discrimination.

We encourage you to read the report in its entirety. As you read and “listen” to the voices of students, colleagues, parents, caregivers, Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, please ask yourself this question, a question that we are asking ourselves: “What can I do to make things better?” It all starts with a conversation and a willingness to learn.

