



**Parents of  
Black Children**



# **A REGION TO WATCH: Halton Region Parents of Black Children Townhall Report**

Prepared For :

**The Ministry of  
Education**

**2022**



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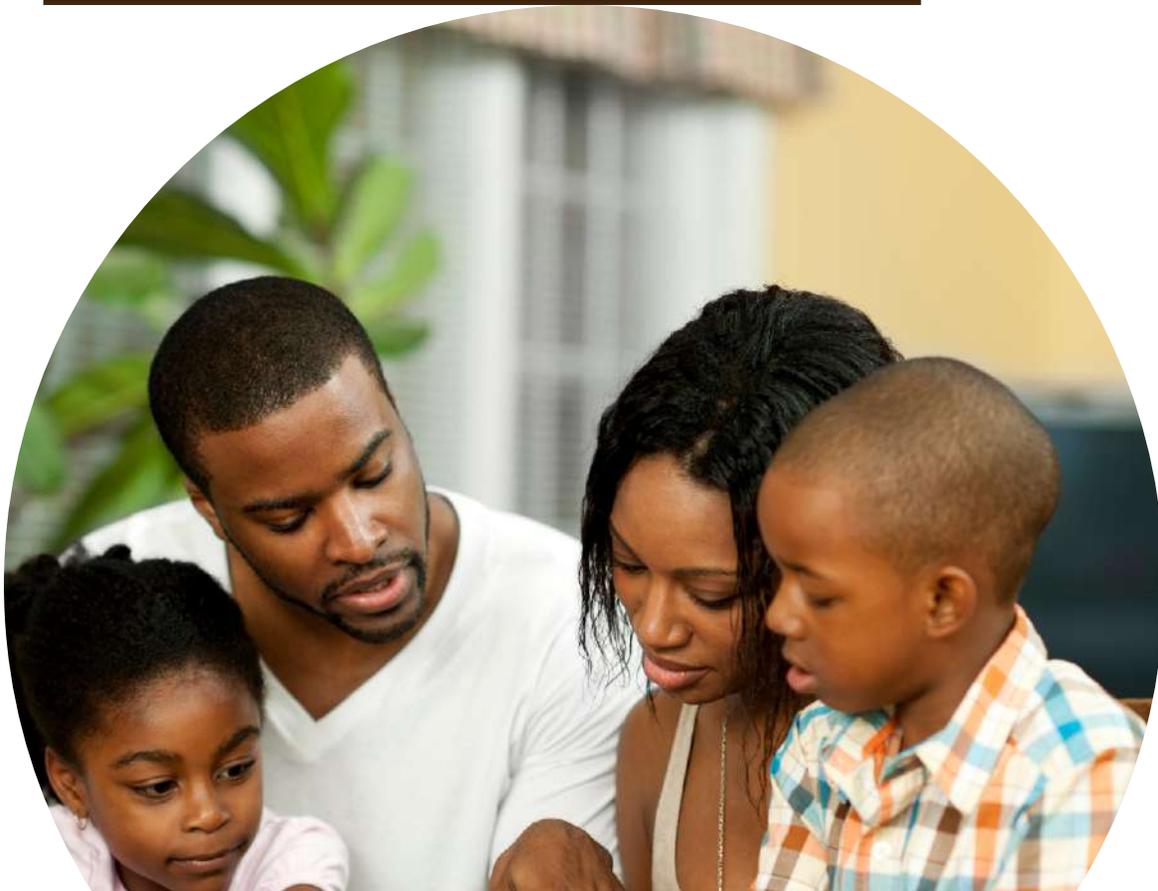
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# The Background

Parents of Black Children (PoBC) is an organization grounded on the principles of combating oppression and anti-Black racism within the education and adjacent systems. We know that Black students and teachers are subjected to traumatic and triggering acts of racism and anti-Black racism every time they enter any school within the province of Ontario. We know our parents are left helpless when they seek support from the education system to rectify their child's learning experience, only for little to no effort to be made for their consolation.

In March of 2022, PoBC released the "*A Call to Action: Systems abuse of Black students within Ontario's Education System*" report. In our reporting, we recognized the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board as a "Region to Watch." PoBC has received a record number of phone calls to support Black families from other agencies. We have received phone calls from parents who have Black children and staff who have concerns about the levels of anti-Black racism in both school boards. Parents with Black Children in the Halton Catholic District School Board have also formed an affinity group to aid one another in coping with and combating the instances of anti-Black racism their children are experiencing.



All of these factors precipitated the need for a town hall to be held in September 2022. This report provides highlights of the town hall and recommendations for the Ministry of Ontario to take specific action to address the concerns relayed by parents and community members.



# The Issue

Anti-Black racism in the education system critically impacts Black students and their parents/guardians. As an organization serving Black families in the province of Ontario, Parents of Black Children is privy to the concerns of parents attempting to navigate through the education system. To accurately reflect the data and tell the story of how anti-Black racism is manifesting across the province, PoBC has created two main methods of data collection. These two methods of data collection are not hosted by any educational body or institution but have been successful in garnering the trust of the community.

## 1. School Racism Reporting Tool

- The PoBC school racism reporting tool is designed to collect instances of anti-Black racism while empowering students, parents, families, teachers, school board members, and others to report acts of anti-Black racism in their local school systems. This anonymous tool is intended for anyone within the public, Catholic, and private school boards to report incidents of racism perpetrated by students, colleagues, school staff, board trustees, and other executive-level board employees.

## 1. Systems Navigation intake form

- The PoBC Systems Navigation service is a wraparound support service for families. When contacted, PoBC acts as an emergency first responder to advocate on behalf of Black children and families. In these cases, Parents of Black Children receive consent to keep a detailed record of each incident of anti-Black racism experienced by the victim(s).

While these data collection methods are important, what is also critical are the stories from families. The stories we have heard from Halton are particularly egregious, traumatic, and undoubtedly anchored in anti-Black racism.



# Halton Town Hall Meeting

On September 20th, 2022, PoBC hosted a Halton Town Hall Meeting in partnership with Halton Black Voices, Halton Parents for Change, and The Black Teacher's Association of Halton Catholic District School Board.

The town hall was held at Sherwood Community Centre (6355 Main St W, Milton, ON L9T 2Y1), and information was shared with community groups in Milton, Burlington, Oakville, and Halton Hills.

There were over 30 attendees, including board staff, trustee candidates, and parents. During the Halton Town Hall, families and educators shared stories of experiencing an alarming rate of racial abuse, lack of accountability, the weaponizing of Children's aid societies, the usage of racial slurs, funneling Black students into remedial courses, and the adultification of Black students. Children are forced to deal with painful and heinous disservice at schools without the appropriate means to protect them.





# Halton Black Parent Council

Parents who joined us during the Halton Town Hall Meeting collectivized to form a Halton Black Parent council. These parents have found a community in advocating on behalf of their children and holding the Halton Catholic District School Board and the Halton District School Board accountable. The Halton Black Parent Council will serve as a municipal parent council that will provide support to Black families who have been harmed and neglected by the education system. Representation is absent and is paramount to building a sense of belonging for Black Staff and students

Since the Halton region schools have failed many Black students and families in creating a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment, the Halton Black Parent Council will respond and offer wrap-around support to the Black community in Halton.

Black parents will be able to seek the council for communal resources, advocacy, accountability measures, updates on the treatment of Black students in Halton region school boards, etc. Parents of Black Children will also work with the Halton Black Parent Council to advocate and seek accountability measures on the provincial and federal levels.





# What Parents Said: Recurring Themes

- **CRITICAL LACK OF REPRESENTATION:** Children identified to their parents that no teachers or adults in their school looked like them (Note: within Halton Catholic District School, Black Educators made up 0.02%).
  - Students openly expressed their access to a more diverse educational experience and environment.
  - Students articulated that having representation in the schools would mean having educators and staff who can relate to their challenges.
  - Students shared that they feel like outcasts and question if Black teachers are allowed to educate
  - Parents and students address the need for culturally responsive programs, specifically for Black students, to address their unique educational experiences.
  - Representation of the Black voice, Black experience, and Black lives within the Education system are paramount.
- **ANTI-BLACK RACISM NOT ADDRESSED:** Parents identified that anti-Black racism against Black students within both boards often came from other students who were racialized. Example: A parent mentioned that a child who identifies as a person of colour but is not Black bullied their child due to their hair shrinking in the rain. The school did not address this incident.
  - Black children have to combat PTSD experienced in primary and secondary school in Post-secondary school.
  - Racism has become the only form of abuse that Black families and Black children are expected to deal with
  - One parent stated their child was a victim of colourism (a form of prejudice and/or discrimination in which people who share similar ethnicity traits or perceived race are treated differently based on the social implications that come with the cultural meanings that are attached to skin colour) that was happening at school and came home teaching their siblings about the prejudice.
    - The parent told their child not to say that again; the child returned to school and told her peers.
    - The parents later had CAS called to their home.



# What Parents Said: Reoccurring Themes

- **The Dehumanization Of Black Children:** Within both boards, parents identified their children were dehumanized to the point of being physically and emotionally harmed.
  - One parent whose child attended an HCDSB school identified that a teacher forced their child to say the n-word (in full) in front of the class during Black history month\* see below for further details. The child was left in tears and highly emotional and, as a result, faced bullying from his peers.
  - Another parent identified the neglect of her child within an HCDSB school when her young daughter was left on the floor with a dislocated leg that no one tended to or called to inform the parents. A grandparent came to the school to pick up the child at the end of the day and found her on the floor, unable to walk.
- **Lack Of Accountability For Anti-Black Racism:** Black children are coming home from school and expressing to their parents that other students are not being addressed for their acts of anti-Black racism
  - Teachers are gaslighting students, encouraging them to second guess themselves or covering these acts up by stating to the other children, “Don’t mean it” or “Maybe we can talk about this later.”
  - School staff has neglected the safety of Black students, failing to provide parents with accurate updates on the whereabouts of their children
- **Racial Violence Through Targeted Treatment Of Black Children:** Multiple parents referenced the racism their children face daily, where they are targeted with verbal violence due to their:
  - Skin colour
  - Skin Darkness
  - Hair Texture
  - Facial features





# What Parents Said: Recurring Themes

- **Targeted Physical Abuse Of Black Children:** Parents noted their child's experience of anti-Black racism
  - Students are being physically abused by other students and neglected by teachers.
    - One student had grown to hate the colour of their skin so much that they scratched skin until it bled.
    - Nothing was done to address the racial violence occurring in the school
  - Students' hair has been cut off, and school staff were not able to provide any explanation
  - On another occasion, a student was picked up from school with a limp. Noticing this, the student was brought to the Hospital
    - The parents, later on, found out their child's leg was broken in two places
    - The parents never received any call or notice saying their child was injured
    - The school did not notify the parents of their child's injury until a day after the parents notified the school their child would not be returning due to an injury
      - The teacher called, stating the child "had a really bad fall."
      - The teacher also stated that their child's leg was injured an hour before school was over.
    - Their child was in pain with two broken bones for over an hour without any medical attention and without their parents being notified.
    - The child later returned to school after the parents were reassured she would have assistance throughout the school day.
      - One day, the child came home from school with a torn pants leg on the same leg that had suffered an injury making it evident they had fallen while at school.



# What Parents Said: Recuring Themes

- When the parents went back to the school, they had no recollection of the child's fall, which meant she did not have assistance.
- The parents ended up switching schools only to face similar issues

**NOTE:** Parents of Black Children have provided mental health support to multiple parents and children within Halton Catholic District School Board as a result of the racial violence and targeted discrimination that both parents and children have faced.

- **Use of the N-WORD by Non-Black Students:** Use of the N-word across HCDSB and HDSB schools is rampant, with school staff reaching out to PoBC to identify the use occurring in multiple instances at sports games and during school, with no consequence.
  - White and racialized, non-Black students have made a game of asking Non-Black children for an N-word pass, implying that once this pass is granted, they are free to use the word.
  - Students are not held accountable for the use of the word, and Black students using the word in a colloquial or culturally prevalent way are more harshly scrutinized and punished than white or otherwise racialized students.





# Schools Identified As Having Recurring Instances Of Anti-Black Racism

## 1. St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Elementary School (HCDSB)

- Superintendent: Lorrie Naar

## 2. St. Michael Catholic Elementary School (HCDSB)

- Superintendent: Julie Angiolillo

## 3. Luman Christie Catholic School (HCDSB)

- Superintendent: Emi Bakaic

## 4. Central Public School (HDSB)

- Superintendent: Colette Ruddock

## 5. Pine Grove Public School (HDSB)

- Superintendent: Jacqueline Newton

## 6. James W. Hill Public School (HDSB)

- Superintendent: Jacqueline Newton

### Additional Information Shared:

- Black students and teachers are racially targeted by other students and teachers while learning or educating in the Halton Catholic District School Board.
- Black teachers and students are also being subjected to contend with racially narrow-minded curricula, evaluation procedures, and guidelines at school.
- Black educators experience and/or witness anti-Black racism firsthand, while Black families experience with anti-Black racism in the education system through their children's interactions with the system.
- A severe lack of representation across the Canadian school system requires immediate attention. Black educators are being purged from the Education system at alarming rates, which serves as a disadvantage to students who deserve an educational experience reflective of their society.
- There are 0.002% of teachers in the Halton Catholic District School Board, which is seven Black educators. Some of the most alarming and egregious cases of anti-Black racism towards students have occurred in Halton's Catholic school board.



# Our Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

Parents of Black Children recommend the following actions for successful outcomes in combating anti-Black racism within the Halton Region.

## Launch an Investigation

- Have an independent third-party equity and inclusion group review the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board
  - First Steps should include an investigation of incidents in the report.
    - Contact the Halton Region Parent Council to initiate the review
  - Apply an equity/ anti-Black racism lens to embed racial disparities as an essential mandate to the Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic District School Board
- Mandate the collection of race-based data and apply an equity/ anti-Black racism lens to the analysis of racial disparities at Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic District School Board
- Ensure all board members' commitment to dismantling anti-Black racism and the weaponizing of public systems such as the Police and the Children's Aid Society while affirming the consequences of engaging in discriminatory behaviour

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training

- Develop and deliver professional learning for all board staff, school staff, and educators with public accountability
- Measures to demonstrate the positive impact of that learning on student and staff experiences.
- All DEI training should specifically cater to each individual educator's roles and responsibilities.
  - Just as there are different levels of Education, there are different levels of
  - comprehension of racial literacy.
  - Therefore all board staff, school staff and educators' racial literacy needs should be assessed and developed based on their knowledge and competency to support equitable and equal educational opportunities.
- Mandate the boards to prioritize anti-Black racism and an illustrated commitment to dismantling anti-Black racism when hiring board staff, school staff and educators



# Our Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

- A demonstration of commitment to dismantling anti-Black racism should be a core competency identified on hiring rubrics for senior leadership, school staff and educators. This should be mandated and aligned with union and governance policies

## **Hire and Support Black Leadership**

- Mandate the School Boards in Halton region to Intentionally hire Black teachers, school staff and administration
- Senior leadership should reflect the Black population in each school board
  - Hire Black Senior leaders
  - Hire Black consultants who will regularly provide updates on racial disproportionality and disparities
- Mandate Halton Region School Boards to Prioritize anti-racist and inclusive working environments for all Blackboard staff, teachers, school staff, and administrators

## **Collect Race-Based and Make it Public**

- From the results of each board, review, create and implement strategic planning.
  - Commit to continuing consultation with Black community members, families, parents and students
  - Create clear goals and expectations for the Halton Region school boards to follow and report progress updates
- The only way to lead conversations on anti-Black racism is by identifying the problem and ensuring the information is made available to all stakeholders, communal partners, and families.
- Hold each board accountable not only to the Ministry but to all educational stakeholders, the Black community, and to each Black child that is educated under their school board.
- Lead anti-Black racism change efforts in each school board
  - Create an education data oversight division to rank, monitor, and hold school boards accountable for their commitment to equity.

## **Create Programming to Improve the Educational Environment and Experience of Black Students**

- Include the histories of people of African descent, as well as past and present-day contributions of Black people, more fully into the K–12 curriculum.
- Mandate the celebration of Black History Month



# Our Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

- Collaborate with other school boards to create an outline of the Ontario Curriculum that prioritizes the teaching of Black History
- Collaborate with other school boards to create an outline of the Ontario Curriculum that prioritizes the Black experience throughout the primary and secondary school curriculum.

## Support Black Families and Black Community Engagement with School Boards and Schools

- Support Black parents to learn about the resources available to them to support them in partnering in their child's Education.
- Inform Black parents and families about
  - Whom to contact when they have issues
  - Addressing issues, filing a complaint and the appeals process
  - How will they be informed of the outcome
- Develop a clear protocol for direct and transparent communication with Black parents

## Accountability Measures

- Provide free ongoing access to therapists, psychologists and counsellors for students, families and educators who are victims of anti-Black racism in the school board
- The mandate there is reporting to the Ontario College of Teachers for educators who exhibit anti-Black racism behaviours and actions
- Ensure students who exhibit behaviours of anti-Black racism are provided anti-racist and inclusivity education as well as notifying their families of their behaviours
- Mandate each board to develop clear anti-racism protocol to address incidents of anti-Black racism
  - Mandating the protocol provides clear guidance on which acts are deemed inappropriate
  - Ensuring protocols outline the steps students, parents, and staff can take to have them addressed.
  - Including language that identifies anti-Black racism as a violation of the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and the Ontario *Health and Safety Act*, which can result in legal action



# Our Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

- A targeted campaign to include Black parents on all mandated committees
- Regulate the requirement to report all incidents of racial violence to OCT. Incident reports should require a case number. Similar to the system used by CAS (Duty to Report)
- Conduct a gap analysis of rules, standards and legislation instituted to govern teachers, trustees and the Ministry to streamline governance policies with Unions, Ministry, OCT, OTF, etc. To ensure a concerted effort from all the corresponding policies and organizational standards are aligned.
- Direction should come from the Ministry for Boards to have a classroom-to-school board accountability chart

## **Connect with Our Community**

- The education system is often the first system students encounter, thus making it the most critical system for Black students to feel supported. Without inclusive reparation to the education system, Black students will continue to fall short, left to feel inadequate and insufficient beyond the education system and in society. Consulting with parents and organizations such as PoBC will help the Ministry navigate best education practices for Black students. We comprehend Black Education, Blackwork ethics, Black liberation, Black rights, Black policy, Black procedures, etc. There is no other community for the Black community to provide a clear scope of what a Black curriculum would look like for Black students in Education that are specifically tailored to the Black experience.

## **Consider Our Ten Demands**

- PoBC is committed to advocating equitable and inclusive Education in the Halton region and across the province of Ontario.

## **Consider the Outcomes**

By failing to take immediate action, the Ministry is condoning an educational environment and system where the following is allowed to take place:

- Black children are harmed and have to go to therapy to recover
- Black children are physically abused with little to no accountability measures for the perpetrator
- The dehumanization of Black children
- The blatant neglect of Black children



# Our Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

- Black teachers who are not supported or encouraged to share knowledge of their lived Black experience
- An educational environment that only reflects the perspectives and representation of White supremacy

Schools are supposed to be safe spaces for all students. Spaces where they are taught and supported by caring adults. Unfortunately, for many Black children, this isn't the case. Black families and students are subject to community policing and are held to unrealistic standards and expected behaviours. Outcomes for Black children are disproportionately poorer due to anti-Black racism and barriers in the educational system. Black children and their families who are facing these barriers develop feelings of isolation and lack of support and often feel misunderstood.

Black parents are asked to trust institutions that have created barriers to their children's success. It is hurtful for Black parents to send their children to school knowing many of the challenges they will face are based solely on their skin colour. The Ministry's failure to take action in supporting Black students and families will only create more distrust between Halton Region School Boards and Black families.

According to our reporting, the Ministry's lack of intervention will continue to neglect Black students and families in the Halton region. All the parents from the Halton Town Hall and PoBC, a grassroots agency, are coming together to provide support for families who have become victims of anti-Black racism in the education system. PoBC continues to make efforts to grant families mental health support and therapy for children and parents. As a community partner, PoBC strongly encourages the Ministry of Education to collect race-based and conduct an in-depth review of Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic District School Board.



# Appendix

## **Anti-Black Racism Themes Experience by Black School Staff:**

- Black Educators/Staff are being denied promotion, hiring, movement, or career advancement due to advocacy against anti-Black racism.
- Black Educators/Staff are being denied promotion, hiring, movement, or career advancement due to discrimination based on race/ethnicity.

## **Anti-Black Racism Themes Experience by Black Students:**

- Anti-Black racism perpetrated by teachers,
- Anti-Black racism perpetrated by the administration- principals
- Anti-black racism perpetrated by students
- Teacher racism
- Anti-Black actions/comments perpetrated by a teacher toward a student
- Neglecting Black Students' Individual education plan (IEP)
- Racist bullying





# Appendix

## PoBC Provincial Cases Summary

Halton District School Board

1. An ongoing issue of systemic racism and anti-Black racism from guidance staff at a high school is known to the board, but nothing has been done to address the issue. Many racialized students have come forward with similar experiences about streaming, racist language, etc. The board is refusing to acknowledge that they are investigating specific staff members and the broader problem. Students have been accused by staff of "playing the race card."
2. A student is being accused of many infractions that the parents find impossible to explain logically. The student is questioned alone without parents present and has been constantly sent out of school and out of the classroom.
3. Two students were moved to the gifted program and had behaviour plans created for minor issues that could be easily addressed by updating their IEP. The students are not aggressive or violent, and parents want the school to update their IEPs and remove behaviour plans from their Ontario Student Record.
4. A Black student in an all-white class has experienced exclusion and bullying and has repeatedly been called the "n-word." The parents wished to move the student out of the classroom but were told by the principal and vice-principal that this was an opportunity for their child to learn resiliency and refused their request.
5. An HDSB social worker noticed the board does not have any mention of Black social workers. The social worker was denied a permanent position because of their advocacy in a meeting with the principal and superintendent for a bi-racial student. The manager advised the reason the social worker was declined the job was due to their need to learn boundaries and not "attack" principals. Other board members confirmed that HDSB is known for not hiring social workers who advocate.



# Appendix

## PoBC Provincial Cases Summary

Halton Catholic District School Board

1. A teacher said the “n-word” in class and is still working at the school. Staff doesn’t have any faith that the administration or the board will do anything about it and is concerned that raising the issue will impact their career. Several other staff members have reported the issue as well.
2. The student guidance counsellor has made a student feel very uncomfortable and insecure about herself. No specifics were given.
3. A young Black boy with immigrant parents was subjected to anti-Black racist policies and procedures and was treated in a racially biased manner.
4. A principal addressed racialized children under his care as “multi-coloured.”
5. A teacher said the “n-word” in class and is still working at the school. This was reported to the principal, who commented that the kids entrapped their teacher and were “ganging” up on the teacher. The teacher is still working at the school.
6. A white teacher said the N-word in the presence of students.



# Conclusion

Inconsistent policies and procedures amongst schools, school boards and Educational stakeholders continue to sustain the political, historical, and educational frameworks that have created high levels of inequality in Education for the Black community. Inconsistency within the approach of Educating Black students continues to lead to higher rates of fragmented success for the Black community. Black students have to deal with and navigate many microaggressions that are specifically targeting their skin colour and ethnicity.

The assumptions made toward Black students are much more prominent in number than those of White students. Instead of Black students being taught the academics needed to be successful in life, they are taught how to survive within public systems. This emphasizes how the skin colour of Black students and teachers influences the mindsets of other teachers and school staff. Teachers and school staff cannot continue to allow their biases to influence their teaching practices when dealing with Black students and colleagues. Policies and procedures are not enough when they have no accountability. When policy is used collaboratively to tackle issues of race and racism, impactful change can be accomplished.

