



Parents of  
Black Children

# PARENTS OF BLACK CHILDREN ADVOCACY FRAMEWORK

**WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING THAT IS NOT RIGHT,  
NOT FAIR, NOT JUST, YOU HAVE TO SPEAK UP.  
YOU HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING; YOU HAVE TO DO  
SOMETHING.” -JOHN LEWIS**

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# - PARENT ADVOCACY IS A RIGHT

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There is no doubt that there is a crisis of anti-Black racism within our education system. This crisis is not new. For generations, Black people have faced and overcome anti-Black racism within the education and adjacent systems. The success of Black children within these systems, despite the barriers, racial violence, and overwhelming odds, is a testament to the perseverance and determination of people of African descent. It is also a testament to advocacy. We know that we are not the first to support Black families navigating the education system. Black community members and groups have provided this support for decades and have a long legacy of advocacy and systems navigation for each other. Historic community organizations like the Colored Ratepayers Association in 1846, Kent County Civil Rights League in 1891, Black Education Project in 1970, Organization of Parents of Black Children and Black Liaison Committee in 1977, have all provided game-changing advocacy to Black communities within Ontario. PoBC's Systems Navigation program has formalized that advocacy support.



# ADVOCACY AND SYSTEM NAVIGATION ACROSS SYSTEMS

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Our Systems Navigation initiative is designed to stand beside parents as they navigate the education system. Systems Navigation and advocacy support for communities most impacted by disproportionality and disparity have a long legacy in providing assistance to those most impacted by disproportional and disparate impacts across systems. Parents of Black Children do not stand alone in providing systems navigation and advanced support.

We borrowed our model from existing support frameworks within systems such as the healthcare and child welfare sectors. Organizations such as Cancer Care Ontario, now part of Ontario Health supports indigenous communities through Indigenous Navigators and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) community-based initiative, One Vision One Voice, anchored child welfare advocates within the system through a pilot project launched in 2018. It is through the best and promising practices of programs like these that Parents of Black Children formed our advocacy and systems navigation support for Black families.

In early 2021, the provincial government announced the launch of Student and Family Advocate programs (SFAs) modelled after the Parents of Black Children's System Navigation program, with PoBC leading the SFA Community of Practice. We stand 17 organizations strong. Known as the Student and Family Advocacy Community of Practice, Parents of Black Children along with these 16 Black-led organizations across this province have the mandate to provide advocacy support to parents within the education system and adjacent systems. This means that across Ontario, there are over 20 Black advocates working to support Black families within the education system and adjacent systems, all of whom have an expectation of cooperation and resolution for families from school boards across this province.



# WHAT IS THE PARENTS OF BLACK CHILDREN APPROACH TO ADVOCACY?

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## OUR ADVOCACY APPROACH IS ANCHORED IN FOUR MAIN PILLARS:

### URGENCY

- We know racial harm is violence. We treat any family coming to us with an issue or concern as an emergent occurrence.

### CONSENT

- All families complete consent forms that allow us to contact schools on their behalf and third-party organizations to provide any needed wrap-around support.

### TRANSPARENCY

- Parents of Black Children will always send an email notification to all school boards or system leadership. We will include the Director of Education, relevant superintendents and administrators as necessary, in order to ensure that everyone is aware of any ongoing situation within a school pertaining to a Black child that Parents of Black Children is involved with.
- Parents of Black Children does not believe in meeting one on one, with single individuals, meeting for coffee to resolve issues or having private or school board leaders initiate private or side conversations, intentionally leaving out advocates who have been brought in, or initiating conversations with advocates leaving out parents.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

- In the spirit of the West African concept of Sankofa, Parents of Black Children adamantly believes in the idea of 'go back and fetch it,' laying a foundation for sustainable and systemic change through accountability, so that those who come after are not navigating the same disparities. It is within this spirit that we expect school boards to hold leaders, staff, administrators, and students perpetuating racial violence and racial harm, accountable. Accountability is not an attack on individuals personally...it is about holding actions to account and creating the space and a place for change.

# WHAT DOES ACCOUNTABILITY LOOK LIKE?

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## THE FOUR R'S

### REPORT:

- Report educators who have been found guilty of discrimination/racism as professional misconduct to the Ontario College of Teachers, Ontario Principals Council, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario, College of Early Childhood Educators, and additional reporting bodies as required.

### REMOVE:

- Remove administrators and educators or students who have committed egregious acts of racism- instead of simply moving them to another school, or another position within the school board.

### RESOLVE:

- Look for student-centred solutions to resolve issues with parents, for immediate impact, instead of gaslighting, creating roadblocks or purposely attempting to undermine the parent or minimize their issues.
- Recognize that any incident a family is dealing with, does not just impact the child, but the entire family and work to offer a resolution for the harm caused.

### REBUILD:

- Deconstruct and examine the processes and policies that led to the issue at hand. Put a plan in place to dismantle any process that creates systemic harm, in order to change the system.

# WHAT DO WE EXPECT FROM SCHOOL BOARDS

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## Timely responses to emails and requests for meetings.

- As school boards charged with the education of our children, it is our expectation that requests to meet to discuss the well-being and/or experience of a child will be met in a timely matter.
- We do not expect school board leaders to centre their own feelings or demonstrate defensiveness in matters pertaining to the experiences of a child or a child's family within their school.

## Active engagement in meetings with parents (ALONG WITH THEIR ADVOCATES.)

- We expect school boards to meet with parents and advocates together.
- We do not expect parameters/conditions with respect to how these meetings are facilitated (i.e. meetings can only be in person, and only one advocate can attend a meeting).
  - School board meetings often involve multiple participants, with varying skill sets and levels of expertise, and advocacy support is no different. ***It is unreasonable and unfair to expect a parent to sit in a meeting with multiple school board representatives and only one advocate by their side.***

## Be prepared to have challenging conversations, be open to discomfort and be ready to identify solutions and resolutions.

- More often than not, it will not feel good to be on the other end of an advocacy discussion when racial harm perpetrated against children is involved. Be prepared to be uncomfortable. Be prepared to feel embarrassed. Be prepared to feel responsible. Be prepared to be vulnerable. As school board leaders, administrators and educators, we ask you to channel all of those feelings into identifying solutions and resolutions to the issue at hand.

## Inclusion of the school board's human rights and equity team in meetings – where a team exists within the board.



# WHAT WE DO NOT EXPECT FROM SCHOOL BOARD STAFF, ADMINISTRATORS, LEADERS, OR UNION REPRESENTATIVES

- Getting up and walking out of meetings or ending a meeting when matters of race, racism or white supremacy are being discussed.
- Use of racial slurs, racial tropes or stereotypes directed at parents or advocates during a meeting.
- Refusing to meet with parents and advocates, delaying or roadblocking meetings.
- Tone policing advocates or parents during meetings or in correspondence communication.
- Delayed action in reconciliation or justice for families, based on a school board's legal or investigative process.





# – WHAT CAN SCHOOL BOARDS EXPECT FROM US?

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In addition to Urgency, Consent, Transparency and Accountability mentioned above. School boards can expect the following when engaging with Parents of Black Children:

- An email from PoBC, notifying school board leaders, superintendents, and administration (where appropriate) that we are supporting a parent within their school community.
- A collaborative approach to resolving concerns raised.
- Timely responses to email communication.
- To be present at meetings with parents and to vigorously support parents who have come to us for support.
- We anchor our advocacy support for parents in the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Policy and guidelines on racism and racial discrimination; Part 2 of which states: *“A citizen who honestly and reasonably believes that he or she is being treated unjustly is entitled to protest vigorously, as long as there is no resort to threatening gestures to accompany the words.”*





**“TO BE AN ACTIVIST IS TO SPEAK. TO BE AN ADVOCATE IS TO LISTEN. SOCIETY CAN’T MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT BOTH.” – EVA MARIE LEWIS**



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