



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

February 10, 2021

The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside

Minister of Education

PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt

Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Whiteside,

Subject: Action on Anti-Black Racism

At the October 24, 2020 meeting of the BCSTA Provincial Council, representing all 60 boards of education in our province, our members unanimously passed the following motion:

“That BCSTA advocates that the Ministry of Education:

- Investigate the root structural causes of anti-Black racism in the education system.*
- Develop and implement mandatory anti-racism education for staff and students alike.*
- Create a database to keep track of all incidents of racism in BC School against students and staff.*
- Take immediate action to incorporate Canadian Black history into the BC K-12 curriculum for the next school year. The revised curriculum would include contributions of Black Canadians and a recognition of the adverse effects of policies and racism on Black Canadians. The curriculum development process would involve fulsome and meaningful consultation with Black-led organizations.”*

Boards across our province are actively doing important work in these areas, and we call on you for additional support in dealing with addressing systemic racism in B.C.'s public education system. There is an intense desire for change, and we saw it on display most recently with the emergence of Black Shirt Day and the swift uptake it had across the province. We want to support these goals earnestly and to the best of our ability through collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Simply put, structural racism exists in our schools and remains an issue in our province's public education system. The path to uprooting it is long and full of challenges. Your ministry's Community Roundtable on Anti-Racism, on which BCSTA has participated on, created a starting point for the anti-racism action plan for B.C.'s public schools.

Furthermore, as noted in your joint release on January 15 with Rachna Singh, Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives, you pledged that you "will continue to listen and work collaboratively to ensure we can effectively strengthen the curriculum, further support diversity and add to the global effort to end systemic racism." On behalf of BCSTA's membership, we also pledge to be a part of those actions, and more, in our collective commitment to being anti-racist. As it was succinctly stated in the motion, "Meaningful change will take place when all students see positive representations of themselves in the curriculum; teachers and staff learn how to be anti-racist; and, school districts are able to track and address incidents of racism in B.C. schools." These are our goals.



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You have already committed to supporting curriculum changes and resources relating to Canadian Black history, and we are pleased that your January 15 release noted you are working closely with the BC Black History Awareness Society to identify additional resources for teachers and students.

In addition to these announcements, we call on you to establish a database of racism incidents in B.C. schools. A record of incidents will enable our districts to be better informed about what students are experiencing and allow provincial agencies and school districts to provide improved anti-racism education aimed at prevention. Chronicling these incidents would also allow districts to track responses to these issues and highlight areas for improvement.

Thank you for considering this request on behalf of our member boards of education and the students they serve. We look forward to continuing this dialogue with you as we move from words to action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Higginson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephanie Higginson
President
British Columbia School Trustees Association

Motion: P1202010.2

CC: Deputy Minister of Education Scott MacDonald
BCSTA member boards of education