

# What YOU can do about Racism in your School: A Ten Point Checklist

- Start with yourself! Check your own prejudices and reluctance; be mindful of your verbal comments and the non-verbal messages you send to other students. Don't expect equity to come naturally to you or anyone else. All of us grew up with ideas, values, biases, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies. We need to spend time figuring out what our own biases and preferences are.
- Do some research into the backgrounds of students of different cultures, religions, etc. Don't be afraid to ask questions about difference, **but** be respectful. Don't assume you know why students might act or look different.
- Make a point of becoming friends with other students who are "not like you". You will learn a lot about the world, yourself, and your life will be enriched. It's not enough to be "tolerant" of difference. We need to put into place practices that make our schools more welcoming, comfortable and places where people are valued.
- Don't ignore racism. If you hear a racist joke or witness other forms of discrimination, speak up! Be ready to discuss how these things make you and others feel and why they are wrong in a respectful manner.
- Advocate for a **Zero-Tolerance Policy** at your school. This means that regardless of how insignificant a racist or discriminatory comment or act might seem, there will be consequences for it. We must also be aware that Zero-Tolerance does not just apply to discrimination that takes place on the basis of race. It also incorporates sexism, homophobia, ageism, discrimination based on religion, able-bodiedness, among others.
- Don't use racism as a crutch! Racism is not the source of all problems, so make sure you have done the appropriate research before claiming that something is the result of racism.
- Make sure you alert the appropriate teachers if you see any tension or abuse transpiring from racism.
- Advocate that your school have a designated authority on these kinds of issues. This person would be someone who is trained in and will be sensitive to all concerns brought to them by students. This person will also maintain confidentiality in the event that students report racist or discriminatory behaviours from teachers. Racism can be a very difficult subject to talk about and even more difficult to address. You do not have to deal with these things alone.
- Do a scan of your school to determine how effective it is at addressing racism. Don't expect people to fit into your school. Instead make it fit the needs of all people.

Here is a checklist to help:

- Is your school a safe and caring environment where all students are treated with care and treat each other with respect;

- Are students aware of the school's code of conduct and that in case of misbehaviour, do all students involved receive a fair hearing and treated fairly and equitably;
  - Can students identify with the curriculum, expected to succeed and given the support to develop their individual academic competencies;
  - Are students made to feel respected and dignified by dealing with incidents such as name-calling, racial slurs and jokes and graffiti seriously;
  - Are teachers trained to address issues of racism and discrimination and are their funds allocated towards purchasing nondiscriminatory supplementary materials;
  - Are all students encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities where they can explore their cultural heritage and backgrounds and individual differences;
  - Are teachers evaluated on the use of biased materials and teaching practices;
  - Are students taught positive social skills such as responsibility, problem-solving skills and respect;
  - In your school, are students, community members, parents and staff involved in the writing, implementation and reviewing of your policies and guidelines;
  - Does your school feel welcoming, inviting, and secure to all.
- Bring in speakers, organize events, and distribute material that helps raise the issue among other students