Naming Systemic Racism, Acknowledging Complicity, and A Commitment to Action:

Anti-Asian Racism in the
York Region District School Board

Dr. Mary Reid & Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad, May 29, 2023

PREFACE

Land Acknowledgement

As lead authors of this report, we acknowledge we are situated on Treaty 13, in Tkaronto. We are settlers to Turtle Island and recognize for thousands of years the land we live and work on has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. By acknowledging the land, we are reminded of our human connection and responsibility to care for the land and its resources, and that can't be done if we are not caring for and respecting each other, regardless of cultural lineage. We are all treaty people and accept our responsibility to honour all our relations.

As readers of this document, you may be on different territories, so we invite you to take a moment to reflect on your relationship with the land you are on. You can visit Whose Land as a resource for learning about the territory you are situated on, find information for a land acknowledgement, and learn about the treaties and agreements signed across Canada. Whose Land is a web-based app that uses GIS technology to assist users in identifying Indigenous Nations, territories, and Indigenous communities across Canada (Whose Land, 2023).

How to Cite this Report in APA citation

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Trigger Warning for Content

This report contains detailed descriptions of anti-Asian racism and may be triggering for some readers. Participants in the surveys and focus groups have bravely shared their pain, suffering, and traumatic experiences with anti-Asian racism. We were honoured to listen to such narratives, try to capture them authentically, and share it with the others through this report which is a call to action. There may be times during and after reading that you may feel sad, angered, and emotionally overwhelmed. Please invest in your self-care and positive coping mechanisms to support you through this process. Reach out to your support system, whether it be family or close friends, to cope, heal, and continue these important conversations. Remember, self-care and self-love are radical acts for healing, resistance, and creating systemic change from inside and outside of institutions, including schools and the education system.

Notes: Throughout this report, we use the lowercase 'w' when describing white people. The capitalization of white has been long practised by white supremacists. For this reason, we do not risk legitimizing such racist ideologies and with intentionality refer to white in lowercase.

We use singular they/them/their pronouns when referring to participants to further protect their identities. All images are from unsplash.com and pexels.com – photo discovery platforms for free uses.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research study provided a forum for Asian members in the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) to share their lived realities and express their concerns. It was guided by a key question:

What are the lived experiences of Asian identifying students, educators, community members, and staff in YRDSB?

The objective was to listen to participants' lived realities in order to:

- amplify the voices of Asian educators, students, staff, and community members across YRDSB;
- legitimize struggles, barriers, discrimination, and racism experienced by Asian members of YRDSB;
- create more equitable and inclusive school environments through commitments to action based on existing gaps identified; and
- identify systemic barriers faced by Asian students, educators, staff, and community members, envisioning the elimination of these pervasive obstacles through a series of recommendations.

This study collected data through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and focus groups. The primary data collection for this study was survey results. We designed two comprehensive surveys, one for Asian teachers and administrators and the other for Asian students in Grades 7 to 12. Survey invitations went out on September 27, 2022 via board-wide communications and to all YRDSB Asian affinity groups. We invited Asian educators and students to complete the survey anonymously. The survey closed on October 31, 2022. We gathered responses from 234 educators and 962 students. The survey consisted of 23 questions, including six Likert scale questions, multiple choice, open-ended questions, and checklist items. The first 10 questions asked for demographic data, while the remaining questions focused on participants' experiences as members of YRDSB. We estimated that the survey took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Due to the negative emotions that some of the questions could potentially induce, participants were permitted to discontinue the survey at any time and to choose not to respond to any of the questions, therefore not all questions had a full response by all participants. Confidentiality of participants' identities were maintained by anonymizing all identifying information before sharing results.

A secondary source of data, which helped with triangulation of the data and identification of emerging themes, were focus groups that took place via the virtual platform Zoom. On September 22, 2022, electronic invitations were sent out across YRDSB via board-wide communications. The information was also shared directly with Asian affinity groups in YRDSB to recruit focus group participants. To make it more accessible, the invitation was published in several languages including English, simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Vietnamese, Korean, and Punjabi. We organized five focus groups with the following intended audiences: community members, students (Grades 7 to 12), teachers, administrators, and non-teaching staff.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the theoretical framework which guided the analysis of the data. It was chosen specifically to amplify the importance of lived experiences as valuable. The following sections outline four

major themes, findings, and a series of recommendations from the analysis of the data collected from the surveys and the focus groups. We ask you to read it with an open mind and heart. You may not agree with all the points raised or the recommendations for changes, but what is most important is identifying where improvements can be made and how you can commit to actions to be part of the solutions and systemic improvements within YRDSB, fighting against all forms of racism including anti-Asian racism.

Theme #1: Need for Asian Representation in the Curriculum

There is a need for Asian representation in the curriculum that empowers students and educators, and more systemic efforts must be made to dismantle anti-Asian racism in classrooms, schools, and across the district.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Investment in People

i) **Mentorship Programs:** YRDSB should further invest in mentorship opportunities and district wide mentorship programs specifically designed to empower Asian students and staff, as well as all racialized and marginalized students and staff across the district. It is important to create and nurture opportunities for staff, specifically between Asian and non-Asian educators, administrators, and students to support one another with implementing more empowering Asian representation within the curriculum.

ii) **Professional Training and Learning:** In addition, targeted professional training and learning is needed for all staff, including administrators and educators, to become aware of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) topics that intentionally deepen understanding of anti-Asian racism.

iii) **Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism Advisory Circle:** Creating a Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism Advisory Circle made up of representation from students, parents, community agencies, educators, administrators, and school trustees will help identify on-going issues and how to support specific schools based on unique community needs.

School staff must reflect the population YRDSB serves which is why representation is so important as it fosters creating more inclusive environments.

2. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) Compensation and Funding

Compensation should be given to educators who continuously lead EDI efforts, including initiatives that address anti-Asian racism. An annual budget for EDI should be allocated specifically for work that supports the dismantling of anti-Asian racism, as well as more awards and recognitions to celebrate the work of students, educators, and administrators that address systemic barriers for equity-deserving students. Training does not always have to be formalized. A monthly drop-in support group is recommended to allow people to share their on-going experiences and bounce ideas off one another. This will lead to dialogue and important conversations from multiple perspectives which will promote relationship-building amongst educators, staff, and administrators. If all initiatives are constantly formalized it can take away from engagement and open dialogue. Furthermore, to facilitate doing this work with the community and offer guidance for teachers and administrators who may not know where to start, more partnerships need to be created with community agencies to lead programming that

affirms Asian identities in schools. This will also create continuity of representation within schools as well as build relationships with other stakeholders who contribute to the school-community interface.

3. Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism Strategy (DAARS)

YRDSB needs to invest in staff and finances to develop a four-year "Dismantling anti-Asian Racism Strategy" with updates and progress provided annually to the public to ensure transparency and institutional accountability. The Dismantling Anti-Asian Advisory Circle should play an integral part of this process, as it needs to be initiated and implemented from the ground up versus top down. A draft should be presented to the community and the greater public as part of consultations to finalize the strategy, including its vision, foundational principles, priorities, actions, and monitoring and accountability framework.

Theme #2: Low Sense of Belonging

Although students and educators generally felt welcomed at school, there is a low sense of belonging by Asian members in YRDSB.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Reporting Anti-Asian Discrimination, Racism, and Hate

Awareness campaigns at the start of each school year for students, parents, educators, administrators, and other stakeholders must include clarity regarding what constitutes microaggressions, discrimination, and acts of violence and how to report these acts through existing tools at YRDSB, as well as the importance of reporting. This is critical for the Asian community as anti-Asian hate is often dismissed as a "joke" or highlighted as a "positive" stereotype. The district needs to review existing reporting tools, i.e., RESOLVE and Report IT. Currently, only administrators are authorized to input incidents of hate in RESOLVE, and Report IT is designated for reporting students' inappropriate behaviours, and not staff members. Hence, incidents involving employees at the board are largely communicated to the principal or superintendent, making it difficult to report anonymously. There should be an option where incidents can be reported anonymously. This would encourage greater participation and mitigate fear from reprisals. Instructions on how to navigate the platform and submit reports should be presented in various languages through translations, making it accessible to the community so that English language learners and new immigrants to the country feel supported. Once a month, different EDI policies at the district level should be highlighted and shared with all stakeholders via online newsletters and the YRDSB website. Awareness is the key in creating an inclusive culture where everyone has a shared responsibility to improve teaching and learning conditions both within schools and in the larger community surrounding schools. At the district level, data should be collected geographically to identify schools or municipalities where there are a greater number of incidents reported. Those schools with higher incidents of harm should be surrounded with more resources and funding allocation to address the root causes of the problem. Overall, statistics both at the board level and by geography should be shared with the public through an annual report as well as the actions taken by the district. This helps to build trust with the community and ensures institutional accountability and transparency.

2. Foster a Sense of Belonging

To foster a greater sense of belonging for Asian members within YRDSB, an annual conference or symposium should be hosted that provides a platform for students, parents, educators, staff, and other community stakeholders to engage with various issues and topics impacting Asian identities. The ideal time would be mid way throughout the school year. Part of the day should be dedicated exclusively to Asian identity gatherings to facilitate mentorship opportunities and healing spaces (e.g., affinity groups can share their concerns and opportunities throughout the year for members to connect). The other components of the conference should be open to everyone as the content, presentations, and guest speakers provide opportunities for others to learn about anti-Asian racism and how to be an ally and work in solidarity with others to dismantle all forms of oppression in schools and in the community. Community agencies should also be invited to present and share the services they offer to support families. This would facilitate partnerships between schools and community agencies to create continuity of care as part of holistically supporting students and families and their unique needs within each geographical area.

3. EDI Virtual Online Hub

YRDSB should create an equity, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI) virtual online hub where educators, administrators, and staff can access leaders, speakers, educational content, elders, and other community members who can speak to their expertise and lived experiences around Asian issues and various EDI topics. The online hub should also highlight how to access various types of services available by community organizations. This will help people who do not know where to begin to connect with relevant people and organizations and ultimately support their local school needs. This initiative will also deepen people's understanding of intersectionality and help disrupt the notion that Asian identities are monolithic and all have the same needs.

Theme #3: Lack of Asian Staff Representation

Diverse Asian representations are lacking among staff at all levels, and most notably in senior leadership positions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Equity Audits to Promote Transparency

YRDSB should extend its use of equity audits of its leadership positions (e.g., in-school teacher leader, centrally assigned teachers, vice-principals, school principals, centrally assigned principals, superintendents of families of schools, superintendents with system assignments, coordinating

superintendents, associate directors, director), to establish the current baseline of all staff who occupy such positions from an identity-based lens. As part of the DAARS, all current and future baselines should be shared publicly for transparency purposes, yearly goals should be set to increase representation of Asian identities in leadership roles to more closely reflect the diversity of the student population (of whom 49% self-identify as Asian). As part of this process, YRDSB's Leadership Framework (2020b) should be revisited and revised from a perspective that prioritizes EDI. The document should entail leadership criteria that explicitly acknowledges the various forms of systemic racism, including anti-Asian racism. All of these changes can be part of the four-year "Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism Strategy" that was previously recommended.

2. Hiring, Promotion, and Advancement Processes and Practices

All hiring, promotion, and advancement processes and practices should be done by panels (at least three members) with at least one member belonging to an equity-deserving group. Criteria for hiring, promotion, and advancement should highly value lived experiences amongst other factors such as number of years teaching, qualities of resilience, and embodiment of heart-felt anti-racism values. Questions asked as part of interviews should promote innovative thinking that challenges normalized educational policies and practices to create more inclusive schools, as opposed to criteria that prioritizes how eloquently interviewees can speak and boast about their achievements. Information on how many people were interviewed, what was their identity, the procedures used for ranking applicants, and making final decisions should be tracked and reported to identify where there is continued discrimination and bias. Further, tracking when and how often racialized candidates are not successful in the promotion process is also necessary as it will shed light on the colonial structures that create barriers for them. YRDSB must consider how to level the playing field for equity-deserving groups, especially those who are not successful in their bid for a position, e.g., application to be a vice-principal or principal. Practices and processes must be implemented for all equity-deserving staff to further develop their leadership skills and competencies, e.g., shadowing, administrative coverage, school and system initiatives. Beyond tracking, reporting should move beyond the actions taken by YRDSB, focusing on the impact realized or not realized by Asian students, staff, parents, and community.

3. On-Going Professional Learning

YRDSB should be committed to on-going professional learning opportunities that amplify Asian voices and identities (e.g., workshops, keynotes, equity projects, research studies) created for educators and administrators (in some cases mandatory instead of optional) to continue to invest in their growth. This can be done through the family of schools within specific geographies to pool together resources and create richer opportunities for sharing and collaboration in relation to the local needs of the community. Students, parents, and community involvement should be prioritized as part of creating such learning opportunities.

Theme #4: Colonial Practices and Procedures Give Rise to Harm and Barriers

Colonial practices and procedures continue to prevail in YRDSB leading to harm and barriers against Asian members, as well as all other marginalized groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Policy and Procedure Review

As part of its four-year cyclical review of policies and procedures, YRDSB should commit to a deep and public annual review of three to five of its policies most closely aligned with EDI. The reviews should occur each school year with public consultations with students and parents from equity-deserving groups to continue its growth in creating more diverse, equitable, and inclusive schools. This includes a re-examination of human resource procedures that designate specific Asian holidays as faith based, and protocols on submitting proof of one's declared faith. It is highly suggested that the reviews begin with policies that have not been changed or amended the longest. This will ensure that policy revisions align with the current needs of schools and communities from an EDI perspective.

2. Community and Healing Spaces

There is a lack of community and healing spaces for Asian members where they can authentically share their lived experiences with others and connect for support and mobilization to challenge inequitable policies and practices in schools. As each area of schools has its own unique needs, it is suggested that such groups can be formed in-person or online, and be coordinated within each family of schools. Budget and resource allocation is required to support the anti-racism work such groups would conduct to make schools in YRDSB more inclusive. These spaces will also promote self-care and relationship building amongst various stakeholders.

3. On-Going Consultation

There has to be great investments in research projects and community consultations to regularly get feedback from various stakeholders in YRDSB to identify current gaps and innovative solutions. For example, ensuring culturally reflective services should be a key priority of the board at all levels and within all schools. Consulting Asian affinity groups within the board is a great starting point to capture their concerns and how they can be involved as part of new changes implemented and how Asian identities can be amplified in classrooms and the larger community (e.g., recognize and celebrate Asian excellence and Asian leaders).

We truly believe that education is key to dismantling racism and fighting against oppression. We remain hopeful that this report propels YRDSB leaders to take actionable next steps so that schools and workplaces become safer spaces for Asian members and all other marginalized groups. This requires stakeholders working together to decolonize district protocols, procedures, and practices. This is the start of a journey to name systemic anti-Asian racism in YRDSB, acknowledge the complicity of the board in not addressing it, and most importantly a commitment to action for improvements.

PROJECT TEAM

The lead authors for this report are Dr. Mary Reid (University of Toronto) and Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad (Wilfrid Laurier University).

Dr. Mary Reid (she/her pronouns) is an Associate Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies (OISE), University of Toronto (UofT). Mary is a first-generation settler on Turtle Island of Hakka Chinese descent, and immigrated to Tkaronto from Arima, Trinidad. As an executive member of the Asian Canadian Educators Network (ACENet), she co-leads the research committee which focuses on examining Asian educators' and students' experiences in schools. In 2020, Mary founded OISE's Asian Student Alliance (ASA) because she saw a need to offer community and healing spaces for Asian students where they can authentically share their lived experiences with others who have similar backgrounds. Mary also serves on UofT's Anti-Asian Racism Working Group, which is committed to dismantling barriers and discrimination faced by Asian members across the institution. Her scholarship centres on the model minority myth and its detrimental impact on Asian students in math classrooms. Her research and work promote a call to action for solidarity and unity against all forms of oppression by raising awareness on how and why oppression impacts different marginalized groups in unique ways. Mary is a devoted vegan because of her love and compassion for animals and she enjoys her daily yoga practice that supports her mind-body alignment. In 2018, Mary was the recipient of OISE's Teaching Excellence Award in Initial Teacher Education. In 2021, she was featured on CBC's *The National* where she discussed concrete ways to dismantle anti-Asian racism in classrooms. More recently, in 2022 Mary won OISE's prestigious Award for Excellence in Educational Leadership for her outstanding service in leading OISE's and the greater UofT's Asian alliances.

Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad (@DrEizadirad) is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Wilfrid Laurier University. He is also a community activist and Executive Director of the non-profit organization Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education (YAAACE) in the Jane and Finch community in Toronto. He is Muslim and of West-Asian descent having immigrated from Iran to Canada. He grew up in Toronto particularly in North York and Scarborough. Settling into a new country was not easy as an English Language Learner, but through support and mentorship he developed self-confidence and became proud of his cultural customs and traditions. His life experiences of attending three high schools in four years developed his passion for equity and social justice and inspired him to become an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT). Dr. Eizadirad is the author of *Decolonizing Educational Assessment: Ontario Elementary Students and the EQAO* (2019), and co-editor of *Equity as Praxis in Early Childhood Education and Care* (2021), *Counternarratives of Pain and Suffering as Critical Pedagogy: Disrupting Oppression in Educational Contexts* (2022), *The*

Power of Oral Culture in Education: Theorizing Proverbs, Idioms, and Folklore Tales (2023), and *Enacting Anti-racism and Activist Pedagogies in Teacher Education: Canadian Perspectives* (2023).
Dr. Eizadirad is also the founder and Director of EDIcation Consulting (www.edication.org) offering equity, diversity, and inclusion training to organizations. Eizadirad has been officiating basketball at various levels for 17 years. He is an international referee for wheelchair basketball representing Canada, most recently having officiated at the Commonwealth Games in the summer of 2022 in Birmingham, United Kingdom. He is also a member of the Canada Basketball Diversity Advisory Council and a member of the Race and Identity-Based Data Collection Community Advisory Panel with the Toronto Police Service.

Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad and Dr. Mary Reid met while teaching at OISE/UofT in the Master of Teaching program. Since then, they have built a strong friendship based on shared values on dismantling racism, de-colonizing classrooms, and collective advocacy.

This report would not be possible without the efforts of wonderful research assistants who contributed to leading and facilitating focus groups, transcribing participants' responses, and identifying emerging themes from the data collected through surveys and focus groups:

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DIVERSITY OF ASIAN DIASPORAS IN CANADA AND THE DEFINITION OF ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

Asian diasporas and identities are vast and rich. Pan-Asian diversity encompasses unique cultures which have enriched and strengthened the social fabric of Canada. According to Statistics Canada (2023):

- Almost half of the immigrant population in Canada was born in Asia. In 2016, 48.1% of all immigrants were born in Asia including the Middle East.
- Asia has remained the top source continent for immigrants in recent years. From 2017 to 2019, 63.5% of newcomers to Canada were born in Asia including the Middle East.
- In 2016, Asian countries accounted for seven of the top 10 countries of birth of recent immigrants: the Philippines, India, China, Iran, Pakistan, Syria, and South Korea.
- By 2036, immigrants born in Asia could represent between 55.7% and 57.9% of all immigrants in Canada (para. 1).

Sadly, systemic racism is a lived reality for Canadians with Asian heritage, culture, and lineage who continue to experience everyday microaggressions and micro-invalidations including in schools as students, parents, educators, and administrators (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020; An, 2022; Gover et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

Throughout this report we refer to *anti-Asian racism* in alignment with the Government of Canada's (2022) definition which "refers to historical and ongoing discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by peoples of Asian heritage, based on others' assumptions about their ethnicity and nationality" (para. 2). This includes overt and subtle racist tropes and stereotypes at the micro and macro levels contributing to "their ongoing social, economic, political and cultural marginalization, disadvantage and unequal treatment" (Government of Canada, 2022, para. 2). At the micro day-to-day level, this includes hurtful comments, acts of violence, and hate crimes in public or online settings such as being spat on, being blamed for SARS or COVID-19 pandemics, being told they cannot drive, or screamed at and told to go back to their homes. At the systemic level, the discrimination and racism display itself through exclusionary policies, laws, and/or practices - or lack of it to protect Asians - that denies the dehumanization and marginalization they experience contributing to erasing of their historical contributions and inequality of access to opportunities (An, 2022; Chen & Wu, 2021; Coloma et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021).

Racialization of Asian identities perpetuates assumptions that Asian people possess distinct qualities and characteristics such as being a perpetual foreigner, model minority, exotic, or a dangerous threat to Western civilization. Such racist beliefs ultimately lead to xenophobia, otherizing, intolerance, and hate against Asian people (Coloma, 2013; Cui, 2019; Chou & Feagin, 2015; Hyun, 2005; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Sakamoto et al., 2023). These negative assumptions and stereotypical representations in the dominant discourse and the media lead to internalized oppression such as many East Asian identities having double eye-lid surgery, a procedure in which an upper-eyelid crease is created, to look more Westernized.

Another example is the prevalence of South and South-East Asian identities lightening their skin through bleaching techniques to look more white. Also, many take up English names so that Westerners can pronounce their names (Oreopoulos & Dechief, 2012). This speaks to the extent that colonial ideologies and white supremacy continue to marginalize Asian identities and contribute to their othering as part of their day-to-day realities (Bauman, 2013; Chou & Feagin, 2015; Kohn & Reddy 2021; Zhao & Biernat, 2017). Further, intersecting oppressions result in varied racist experiences. For example, East and South-East Asian women experience fetishization and hyper-sexualization (Hwang & Parreñas, 2021) while South-Asian men experience more racial profiling by government border crossing services (Selod, 2018).

Anti-Asian racism has deep historical roots beginning with the arrival of Canada's first Asian immigrants in the 1800s. In the 1800s many Chinese were accepted to come to Canada, being perceived as hard workers, to help build the Canadian Pacific Railway which connected eastern Canada to British Columbia. The railway contributed to Canada's development through better transportation options and sharing of resources and trading amongst the provinces and territories. Yet, upon completion of the railway in 1885, the Chinese head tax was enacted to restrict immigration of the Chinese since labour was no longer needed. It started out at a fee of $50 which was a lot of money at the time and later increased to $100 and $500 (Chan, 2020). To provide perspective, $500 was equivalent to two years of salary or enough money to purchase two homes in a major Canadian city. On July 1, 1923, Canada passed the Chinese immigration act, commonly referred to as the 'Chinese Exclusion Act' which prohibited Chinese immigration to Canada. It was the first legislation in Canadian history to exclude immigration on the basis of ethnic background. This racist legislation was upheld for 24 years.

In 1908, Canada enacted another exclusionary and discriminatory immigrant policy which required all immigrants to arrive on Canadian shores by a continuous journey from their country of origin. It specifically targeted and excluded immigrants from India and Japan as at the time there was no continuous boat or ship service from India or Japan to Canada (Yao, 2020). Furthermore, in 1941 due to rising tension between the United States and Japan resulting from the bombing of Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, Canada declared war on Japan. As Yao (2020) points out, "the federal government used the War Measures Act to send 90 per cent of the Japanese Canadian population, roughly 21,000 men, women, and children, into crowded internment camps" (para. 9). They were treated as prisoners of war, their properties and assets seized and sold by the government, some deported back to Japan, and others relocated to do manual labour.

Such are the tragedies rooted in colonial logic and white supremacy that have exploited Asian identities for the benefit of Canada as a country (Coloma, 2013; Huynh et al., 2011; Hwang & Parreñas, 2021; Kohn & Reddy, 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The aforementioned racist and discriminatory legislation and laws directly harmed and killed many Asian people, all while attempting to erase their major contributions to Canada's development (Government of Canada, 2018) since it disrupts the metanarrative and utopian ideologies of Canada being a welcoming, multicultural, and inclusive society.

The current manifestations of racial injustices experienced by Asian people living in Canada takes on a variety of forms ranging from hateful ideologies to overt violence and assaults (Chen et al., 2021; Chen & Wu, 2021; Cui & Kelly, 2013; Gover et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Lee, 2006; Liang et al., 2018; Oreopoulos & Dechief, 2012; Trieu, 2019; Wang et al., 2022). As with all forms of hate and oppression, anti-Asian racism occurs and is perpetuated within systems and their normalized ideologies, policies, and practices continue to be exclusionary in subtle ways. These structures value dominant ways of being and those who do not conform often experience marginalization and exclusion.

ASIAN DIVERSITY IN THE YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (YRDSB)

Asian diasporas and identities are rich in diversity. People who identify as Asian Canadians can trace their ancestry to the continent of Asia. The Asian population is the largest and fastest growing racial/ethnic group in Canada, and comprises the highest rates of new immigrants to Canada at 62% (Statistics Canada, 2022). Racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, and sexual identities involve ongoing complex processes that depend on lived experiences, sense of belonging, cultural values and norms, and vary among different generations. For these reasons, it is critical that Asian identities and diasporas are not perceived as a monolithic group, but rather as vast and rich. Asian Canadians have unique immigration histories and intersectional identities that are constantly shifting and re-negotiated, which contribute to the dynamic cultural landscape that is constantly evolving across Canada.

York Region's communities are rich in diversity, with some areas representing Canada's most ethnically diverse cities including large populations from East Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, and West Asia (Regional Municipality of York [RMofY], 2016). The intersecting identities of Asian students, educators, and staff bring unique lived experiences to YRDSB schools. According to the York Region municipality census report, the two largest visible minority groups are Chinese (45%) and South Asian (22%), and the top five countries of origin for recent immigrants to York Region are China, Iran, Philippines, India, and Pakistan, while South Korea, Hong Kong, and Sri Lanka account for three of the remaining top 10 countries (RMofY, 2016). Most popular languages spoken at home other than English are Mandarin, Cantonese, and Farsi (RMofY, 2016; YRDSB, 2020a). With these statistics, it is clear that YRDSB and the municipality of York Region encompass communities that are enriched and strengthened by diverse Asian populations.

Sadly, the municipality of York Region is not immune to malicious acts of hate against Asian community members. A report from the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2008) concluded that a series of attacks on Asian-Canadian fishermen in Georgina and near Aurora were rooted in anti-Asian racism. Asian-Canadian anglers (who were legally fishing) were physically assaulted, called racial slurs, demanded their fishing licences, had their fishing equipment damaged, told to go back to their country, had stones thrown at them, and some were even pushed into the water. Other reports involve hate crimes against Asian business owners in York Region such as notes of hatred left at shopkeepers' doors in Newmarket (Weisz, 2021). In early 2023, anti-Asian hate speech graffiti was discovered a few days prior to Lunar New Year, at a Markham mall. The graffiti spelled out the "ch" word twice along with disparaging messages (Arias Orozco, 2023). And most recently, in the midst of Ramadan, a man attempted to run over worshippers at a mosque in Markham, tore up the Qur'an, and yelled out racial and Islamophobic slurs (Grimaldi, 2023). It is clear that York Region is vulnerable to anti-Asian racism, which warrants the necessity for YRDSB to cultivate schools that are agencies of change.

YRDSB is the third largest school district in Ontario consisting of 180 elementary schools serving approximately 84,940 students and 33 secondary schools serving 41,181 students (YRDSB, 2023a), with an annual budget of $1.5B. The Board of Trustees' current multi-year strategic plan, a reflection of emergent priorities identified by educational communities, is guided by the following priorities:

- Foster Well-Being and Mental Health
- Build Collaborative Relationships

- Empower Ethical Leadership
- Champion Equity and Inclusivity

YRDSB has a vibrant Asian population, with 49% of its student population self-identifying as Asian. This category comprises East Asian (29%), South Asian (15%), and South East Asian (5%) (YRDSB, 2020a).

There exists substantial racial disparities within the YRDSB workforce. According to YRDSB's Employment Equity Audit Report, its first recommendation is to close the teacher diversity gap so that the teaching population better reflects the students they teach (Turner Consulting Group Inc., 2019). The report describes particularly large disparities for East Asian and Southeast Asian educators, as well as Middle East and West Asians. Furthermore, the greatest gap within the workforce exists among East Asians, stating that "while East Asians make up 24% of the York Region populations, they comprise only 7% of the YRDSB workforce" (Turner Consulting Group Inc., 2019, p. 13). It is without doubt that there is a critical need for YRDSB to better understand the needs of their Asian students, teachers, administrators, community members, and other employees to foster safer and more inclusive spaces through commitment to action.

THE PANDEMIC EXACERBATED ALREADY EXISTING FORMS OF ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

Although a surge of anti-Asian racism quickly surfaced in January of 2020, anti-Asian sentiment is not a new phenomenon. Historically, Asian Canadians have long been the target of hate and violence, since the arrival of Asian immigrants in the 1800s. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated already existing forms of xenophobia and this continues to be a lived reality for Asian Canadians (An, 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Gover et al., 2020; Reid, Luu, & Reid, 2022; Sakamoto et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2021). People of Asian descent have been the scapegoats for COVID-19 in which they have been stigmatized and blamed for the global health crisis. Canada's major cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal had among the highest rates of anti-Asian hate crimes per capita during the height of the pandemic from 2020 to 2021 (Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, 2021). The world watched endless media reports of Asian people being physically assaulted, spit on, coughed on, verbally abused, and murdered which triggered harm for many Asian community members. In many cases, Asians did not feel safe leaving their homes due to exposure to violence. The Chinese Canadian National Council (2022) reported over 1,150 hate crimes targeting Asian Canadians, over a one-year period, where the majority of victims were the elderly and women. To this day, Asian people continue to be scapegoats for COVID-19.

CALL FOR SOLIDARITY

We urge that school boards ensure that all their stakeholders critically understand historical and current manifestations of oppression and marginalization that negatively impact Asian educators, staff, students and their families. This requires taking actionable steps to dismantle barriers Asian people face by recognizing and calling out all forms of xenophobia directed towards Asian members across schools and communities.

The data collected in this study identifies issues of anti-Asian racism within the institution, in which actionable steps grounded in evidence-based research are offered. The main objective of this report is to raise awareness of the challenges faced by Asian members across YRDSB and to denounce all forms of anti-Asian racism, with the end goal of fostering inclusive spaces and a sense of belonging for all marginalized groups through commitment to short- and long-term actions.

To truly achieve equity and empower marginalized students and their families to attain positive outcomes, it is important to understand how oppression plays out in educational systems. Systemic racism and discrimination are forms of oppression that are deeply embedded in society's institutions, legislations, and organizations rooted in colonial logic and white supremacy (Battiste, 2013; Krenshaw, 2021; Eizadirad et al., 2023; Kohn & Reddy, 2021; Kumashiro, 2004; Matias, 2016; Tuck & Yang 2012). This includes the education system and its various districts, schools, school communities, and pre-service education programs (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2022; Coloma et al., 2021; Eizadirad, 2019; Matis, 2016; Shin et al., 2022; Xie, 2022). It is critical that educators deconstruct systems of oppression from an intersectional lens examining how the imbalance of power and privilege impacts different marginalized groups in unique ways contributing to inequality of access to opportunities. When we understand how the intersection of white supremacy and colonial ideologies impacts various groups differently, then we can better engage in allyship and stand united through cross racial solidarities to challenge various forms of inequities and injustices both in schools and within other institutions such as the healthcare and the justice system. For these reasons, combating anti-Asian racism can only be realized by also addressing anti-Indigeneity, anti-Blackness, ableism, anti-semitism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and all other forms of systemic marginalization.

Conversations about whose oppression should be prioritized is counter-productive. We encourage all readers to engage with an open mind and heart while reading this report, asking themselves how various marginalized groups can work together to challenge systemic forms of racism and discrimination. It has to be an all hands on deck approach to disrupt and change colonial ideologies normalized and embedded within schools and other institutions. It is an uphill battle to create systemic change within institutions, but it is possible with concerted and united actions.

The following is a list of various YRDSB's equity documents that can contribute to understanding other marginalized groups' lived experiences and identifying areas for allyship and solidarity (listed in alphabetical order):

- Centre for Black Student Excellence
- Discriminatory Slurs and Statements Protocol: Guidance for Staff in Learning and Working Environments
- Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy
- EIAC - Classism/Poverty Sub-committee Conversation Feedback
- Employment Equity Plan
- Equity Action Plan
- Equity and Inclusive Education - Board Policies and Procedures
- Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee (EIAC) Consultations: Islamophobia Sub-Committee Recommendations
- Gender Identity and Expression Guidelines
- Indigenous Education and Equity Strategy
- Protocol for Addressing Incidents of Hate and/or Discrimination
- Recommendations from the Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee Regarding AntiBlack Racism
- Report IT
- Strengthening Holocaust Education to Counter Rising Antisemitism

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research study provided a forum for Asian members in YRDSB to share their lived realities and express their concerns. It was guided by a key question: *What are the lived experiences of Asian identifying students, educators, community members, and staff in YRDSB?*

The objective was to listen to participants' lived realities in order to:

- amplify the voices of Asian educators, students, staff, and community members across YRDSB;
- legitimize struggles, barriers, discrimination, and racism experienced by Asian members of YRDSB;
- create more equitable and inclusive school environments through commitments to action based on existing gaps identified; and
- identify systemic barriers faced by Asian students, educators, staff, and community members, envisioning the elimination of these pervasive obstacles through a series of recommendations.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:
SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS THROUGH CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the theoretical framework which guided the analysis of the data. It was chosen specifically to amplify the importance of lived experiences as valuable. CRT recognizes emotions as data and provides insights into the curriculum of life as experienced by Asian identities in various roles within YRDSB. We agree with Dixson and Anderson (2018) who point out that key characteristics of CRT include: valuing the knowledge of people of colour as counter-narratives, problematizing the discourse of colour blindness and meritocracy, privileging of whiteness rooted in institutional policies and practices, and privileging of expressions of identities and regulation of behaviour. Therefore, what is normalized becomes superior by default as all other expressions and behaviour are measured against it. In school and teacher education programs, this often occurs in subtle ways via the discourse of professionalism and how a teacher is expected to show up and behave (Eizadirad et al., 2023). We listened intently to what was shared with us through the focus groups and the surveys. The goal was not to sanitize what we heard from the research participants but rather share the good, the bad, and the ugly.

This study collected data through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and focus groups. This approach enabled the researchers to garner detailed descriptions of participants' responses to open-ended survey and focus group questions, which also included collecting demographic and identity-based information. Through various meetings, the lead authors trained the research assistants on how to deconstruct the qualitative data sets and apply coding techniques by labelling and organizing participant responses to determine emerging themes and relationships among the themes. Iterations of analysis involved the coding of the qualitative data by individual research assistants listing the initial coded items; then collectively the entire research team reorganizing the full set of initial codes into categories; and finally the lead authors revisiting the list of categories and finalizing it in conjunction with the quantitative data. This study's quantitative data offered a secondary source, namely the results from the Likert scale questions (scale 0 - 10) and the identity-based data collected.

SURVEYS FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

The primary data collection for this study was survey results. We designed two comprehensive surveys, one for Asian teachers and administrators and the other for Asian students in Grades 7 to 12. The purpose of the survey was to better understand the lived experiences of Asian identifying educators and students in YRDSB. Survey invitations went out on September 27, 2022 via board-wide communications and to all YRDSB Asian affinity groups. We invited Asian educators and students to complete the survey anonymously. The survey closed on October 31, 2022. We gathered responses from 234 educators and 962 students.

We used Qualtrics survey software to collect and store responses which uses secure servers based in Canada. The survey consisted of 23 questions, including six Likert scale questions (scale 0 - 10), multiple

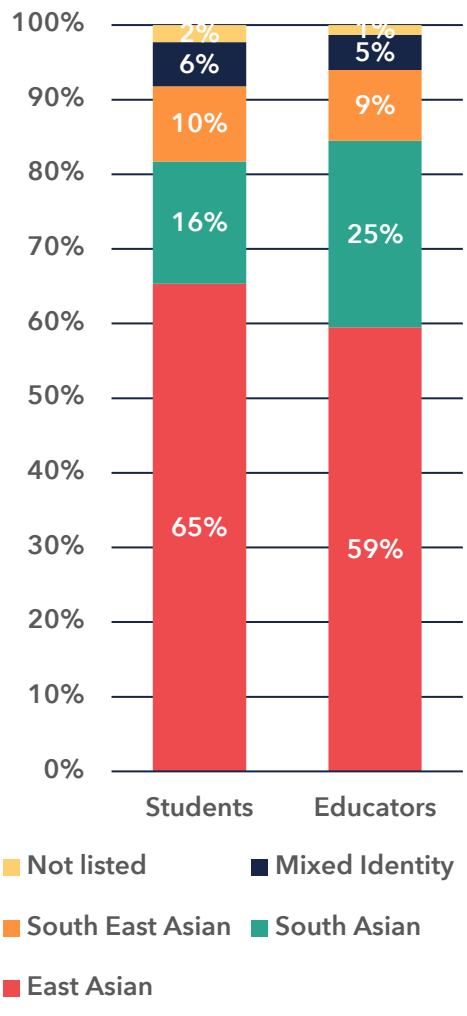
choice, open-ended questions, and checklist items. The first 10 questions asked for demographic data, while the remaining questions focused on participants' experiences as members of YRDSB. We estimated that the survey took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Due to the negative emotions that some of the questions could potentially induce, participants were permitted to discontinue the survey at any time and to choose not to respond to any of the questions, therefore not all questions had a full response by all participants. Confidentiality of participants' identities were maintained by anonymizing all identifying information before sharing results. Raw data was only available to the researchers. They/them/their pronouns are used to refer to participants to further protect their identities. Quotations used in this report do not contain identifying information.

DEMOGRAPHICS FROM SURVEYS

Table 1 below shows the racial identity of students and educators who completed the survey where 65.34% of students and 59.48% of educators identified as East Asian, followed by 16.39% of students, and 25% of educators self-identifying as South Asian, and 10.08% of students and 9.48 % of educators being South East Asian. Mixed identities represented 5.88% of students and 4.74% of educators, while 2.31% of students and 1.29% of educators specified a racial identity that was not listed. Of this 2.31% and 1.29%, the majority indicated they were of Middle Eastern descent, as well as Central Asian.

Table 1. *Racial Identity of Survey Respondents.*

Race	Students % (n=962)	Educators % (n=234)
East Asian	65.34%	59.48%
South Asian	16.39%	25.00%
South East Asian	10.08%	9.48%
Mixed Identity	5.88%	4.74%
Not listed	2.31%	1.29%
Total	100%	100%



YRDSB serves nine municipalities. Survey results, expressed below as Table 2, show that almost 70% of Asian students attend schools in the region of Markham, while 14.89% of students attend schools in Richmond Hill, followed by Vaughan at 10.66%. Similarly, the largest percentage of educators who completed the survey worked in Markham at almost 50%, followed by Richmond Hill at 15.09%, Vaughan at 13.21%, and Aurora at 7.17%. The remaining municipalities of YRDSB show significantly lower percentages.

Table 2. *Percentage of Respondents across the Nine YRDSB Municipalities.*

School Municipality	Students % (n=962)	Educators % (n=234)
Aurora	2.31%	7.17%
East Gwillimbury	0.04%	0.75%
Georgina	0.20%	0.75%
King	0.70%	1.13%
Markham	67.91%	49.81%
Newmarket	1.51%	7.92%
Richmond Hill	14.89%	15.09%
Vaughan	10.66%	13.21%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	1.41%	4.15%
Total	100%	100%

Tables 3, 4, and 5 below outline more specifically the identity of the survey respondents. This is important as each group has its own unique needs and concerns. Of the 962 students who participated in the survey, the breakdown indicated 45.05% were in Grade 7 to 8, followed by 29.09% in Grade 9 to 10, and 25.86% in Grade 11 to 12. Results of the educators' survey showed that the majority were teachers at almost 90%, while the remaining 10% were administrators. The division that educators worked in showed that almost 55% were elementary educators (Kindergarten to Grade 8), while 41.3% indicated secondary (Grade 9 to 12), and a small percentage stated they worked in both divisions.

Table 3. *Grades of Student Respondents.*

Grade	Percentage (n=962)
Grade 7 to 8	45.05%
Grade 9 to 10	29.09%
Grade 11 to 12	25.86%
Total	100%%

Table 4. *Position of Educator Respondents.*

Position	Percentage (n=234)
Teacher	89.91%
Administrator (Principal, Vice Principal, Superintendent, Central Administrator)	10.09%
Total	100%

Table 5. *Division of Educator Respondents.*

Division	Percentage (n=234)
Elementary (Kindergarten to Grade 8)	54.78%
Secondary (Grades 9 to 12)	41.30%
Both	3.91%
Total	100%

Table 6 below shows the gender identity of respondents. The survey garnered more female student respondents at 47.29 %, followed by males at 41.34%. About 4% of students preferred not to answer. The majority of educator survey respondents identified as female at approximately 80%, followed by males at 18.53%. The remaining gender identities had lower percentages.

Table 6. *Gender Identity of Survey Respondents.*

Gender Identity	Students % (n=962)	Educators % (n=234)
Female	47.29%	79.74%
Male	41.34%	18.53%
Gender Fluid (gender identity or expression changes or shifts along the gender spectrum)	1.67%	0.43%
Gender Non-conforming (does not conform to society's expectations of the sex assigned at birth)	0.52%	0.00%
Non-binary (gender identity that is outside of the binary of male and female)	0.73%	0.00%
Questioning (unsure about one's own gender identity)	2.92%	0.00%
Transgender (gender identity differs from the one associated with sex assigned at birth)	0.63%	0.00%
A gender identity not listed above	0.84%	0.00%
Prefer not to answer	4.07%	1.29%
Total	100%	100%

Table 7 outlines the sexual identity of survey respondents which refers to how one defines their own sexual orientation, specifically one's sexual attraction to other people. Approximately 60% of student respondents indicated that their sexual identity was straight/heterosexual, while 14.81% preferred not to disclose their sexual orientation. Almost 8% of students in this study identified as bisexual, followed by 6.56% who selected an asexual orientation, and 5.19% were unsure of their sexual identity. The majority of educators indicated they were straight/heterosexual at 89.13%, followed by 5.22% who preferred not to answer, while 2.17% stated they were gay/lesbian and 0.87% bisexual.

Table 7. *Sexual Identity of Survey Respondents.*

Sexual Identity	Students % (n=962)	Educators % (n=234)
Asexual (does not experience sexual attraction)	6.56%	0.87%
Bisexual (attraction to both male-identified and female-identified people)	7.62%	0.87%
Gay/Lesbian (attraction to people of the same sex)	1.70%	2.17%
Pansexual (attraction to people of diverse sexes and/or genders)	2.22%	0.43%
Questioning (unsure of one's own sexual orientation)	5.19%	0.43%
Straight/Heterosexual (attracted to someone of the opposite sex)	59.05%	89.13%
A sexual identity not listed above	2.86%	0.87%
Prefer not to answer	14.81%	5.22%
Total	100%	100%

Table 8 below outlines the disability identity of survey respondents. Students and educators were asked if they considered themselves as a person with a disability. Among the students, 7.66% indicated yes, 78.59% stated no, 10.28% were not sure, and 3.46% preferred not to answer the question. Similarly, the majority of educators indicated they did not have a disability at 87.88%, while 7.36% stated yes, and 3.03% were unsure.

Table 8. *Disability Identity of Survey Respondents.*

Do you have a disability?	Students % (n=962)	Educators % (n=234)
Yes	7.66%	7.36%
No	78.59%	87.88%
Not Sure	10.28%	1.73%
Prefer not to answer	3.46%	3.03%
Total	100%	100%

Table 9 captures the languages spoken at home. When asked about languages spoken other than English, 89.53% of students and 83.12% of educators indicated yes they spoke a language other than English, while 10.47% of students and 16.88% of educators stated they only speak English. The most popular languages spoken other than English were Mandarin and Cantonese for both students and educators.

Table 9. *Languages Spoken other than English of Survey Respondents.*

Language(s) other than English?	Students % (n=962)	Educators % (n=234)
Yes	89.53%	83.12%
No	10.47%	16.88%
Total	100%	100%

Table 10 below outlines the religious identity of the survey respondents. The religious identity of students showed that 18.16% indicated they had no religion or spiritual affiliation, while 15.73% selected Atheist, followed by 13.5% who were not sure of their religion, and 12.23% identified as Christian (non-Catholic). For educators, the highest response was Catholic at 21.43%, followed by Christian (non-Catholic) at 12.7%, while 12.7% preferred not to answer. See table below for percentage of other religions represented.

Table 10. *Religious Identity of Survey Respondents.*

Religion	Students % (n=962)	Educators % (n=234)
Agnostic (One who believes it is impossible to know if any God(s) exist.)	7.67%	7.94%
Atheist (One who does not believe in any God(s).)	15.73%	5.56%
Buddhist	6.12%	8.73%
Catholic	2.04%	21.43%
Christian (non-Catholic)	12.23%	12.70%
Hindu	7.18%	0.00%
Indigenous Spirituality	0.10%	0.00%
Jewish	0.10%	9.13%
Muslim	7.67%	3.97%
Sikh	1.36%	7.14%
Spiritual but not religious	3.20%	5.16%
No religion or spiritual affiliation	18.16%	1.59%
A religion or spiritual affiliation not listed above (please specify):	1.26%	1.19%
Not sure	13.50%	2.78%
Prefer not to answer	3.69%	12.70%
Total	100%	100%

FOCUS GROUPS

A secondary source of data, which helped with triangulation of the data and identification of emerging themes, were focus group discussions that took place via the virtual platform Zoom. On September 22, 2022, electronic invitations were sent out across YRDSB via board-wide communications. The information was also shared directly with Asian affinity groups in YRDSB to recruit focus group participants. To make it more accessible, the invitation was published in several languages including English, simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Vietnamese, Korean, and Punjabi. We organized five focus groups with the following intended audiences: community members, students (Grades 7 to 12), teachers, administrators, and non-teaching staff.

To sign up for a focus group, respondents had to click a link to register. For the community focus group, participants had the option to request for translators. Two respondents requested Mandarin translators which were provided. The table below displays the focus group dates, times implemented, RSVP deadlines, the number of people who registered, and the number of people who attended. The largest turnout for focus groups were teachers at 61 participants, followed by community members at 36. There was a very low turnout by students with only 2 participants but they did have a large response rate to the survey where 962 students completed it.

Table 11. *Overview of Various Focus Group Sessions Offered*.

Audience	Session Date	Time (EST)	RSVP Deadline	No. registered	No. attended
Community Members	October 6	5 to 7pm	October 3	75	36
Students (Grades 7 to 12)	October 11	5 to 7pm	October 3	24	2
Teachers	October 17	5 to 7 pm	October 11	77	61
Administrators	October 19	5 to 7pm	October 11	25	22
Non-teaching Staff	November 2	5 to 7pm	October 26	15	8

As a token of appreciation for their time participating in the focus groups, participants were provided a book that amplified Asian identities. At the end of each focus group, participants were invited to complete an online form requesting their book preference. The books offered included:

- *Forbidden Purple City* by Philip Huynh
- *Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai
- *My Day with Gong Gong* by Sennah Yee
- *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners* by Joanna Ho, and
- *Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family* by Ibtihaj Muhammad.

Research assistants (RAs) underwent training with the lead authors, Dr. Reid and Dr. Eizadirad, on how to facilitate focus group discussions. During the training, RAs were given a script and demonstrations on how to engage participants in group dialogue. The lead authors and RAs facilitated sessions of five to seven participants in individual breakout rooms. A total of six open-ended questions were asked, with the aim to gather information on participants' lived experiences as Asian members of YRDSB. Sessions were recorded, and later transcribed by the RA facilitator. Throughout the discussions, facilitators took notes on emerging themes. As part of the focus group script, participants were asked to respect each other's perspectives and opinions. Facilitators stressed keeping the session confidential, and asked participants to refrain from using names or identifying information when they talked about their personal experiences. Participants were also asked to not discuss other participants' responses outside of the focus group. Due to the negative emotions that some of the questions could potentially induce, participants were permitted to step away from the session if they felt triggered and were encouraged to engage in self-care by reaching out for support.

Overall, the focus group sessions were intimate spaces where participants provided detailed descriptions of their experiences through raw emotions reflecting their past and on-going negative and traumatizing experiences. Simultaneously, it was a space for healing and finding community as participants realized they are not alone in what they are experiencing and there are others they can connect with who are passionate about equity, social justice, and making their schools more inclusive. It was clear that many participants were appreciative of the research project and its objective of hearing what they have to say as Asian identities.

THEMES, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS:
THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A MORE INCLUSIVE AND ANTI-RACIST SCHOOL BOARD

The following sections outline four major themes, findings, and a series of recommendations from the analysis of the data collected from the surveys and the focus groups. We ask you to read it with an open mind and heart. You may not agree with all the points raised or the recommendations for changes, but what is most important is identifying where improvements can be made and how you can commit to actions to be part of the solutions and systemic improvements within YRDSB.

Theme #1: Need for Asian Representation in the Curriculum

There is a need for Asian representation in the curriculum that empowers students and educators, and more systemic efforts must be made to dismantle anti-Asian racism in classrooms, schools, and across the district.

Theme #2: Low Sense of Belonging

Although students and educators generally felt welcomed at school, there is a low sense of belonging by Asian members in YRDSB.

Theme #3: Lack of Asian Staff Representation

Diverse Asian representations are lacking among staff at all levels, and most notably in senior leadership positions.

Theme #4: Colonial Practices and Procedures Give Rise to Harm and Barriers

Colonial practices and procedures continue to prevail in YRDSB leading to harm and barriers against Asian members, as well as all other marginalized groups.

The four major themes and the various sub-themes are interconnected and overlap in many ways. They are not ranked in any significant order of priority. All key findings require critical attention and commitments to action to be addressed. The objective is to identify key areas where systemic inequities exist, but more importantly provide a series of short- and long-term recommendations which can lead to improvements over time. It is important that YRDSB views the gaps identified as a starting point, a baseline of where they are currently in their journey to becoming more equitable, diverse, and inclusive. Annually reporting on the progress of the recommendations is vital to maintain public trust and ensure institutional accountability and transparency to address needs and concerns of Asian identities expressed in this report.

THEME #1: NEED FOR ASIAN REPRESENTATION IN THE CURRICULUM

There is a need for Asian representation in the curriculum that empowers students and educators, and more systemic efforts must be made to dismantle anti-Asian racism in classrooms, schools, and across the district.

The survey data and focus group discussions demonstrate that the majority of participants strongly articulated the lack of Asian focused content across YRDSB classrooms and schools. Asian perspectives were often highlighted using superficial approaches via historical contexts or by learning about Asian holidays, special occasions, and events. Respondents strongly expressed limited efforts in addressing anti-Asian racism across schools and district-wide. The following sub-themes emerged from what was shared from the survey respondents and focus group participants.

Sub-Theme 1.1: Lack of Representation Beyond Passive Historical Subjects

If there was any direct teaching about Asian perspectives, it was mainly limited to historical contexts such as Chinese immigrants building railroads, the Komagata Maru, and the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II. One community participant noted how this narrow historical context is problematic:

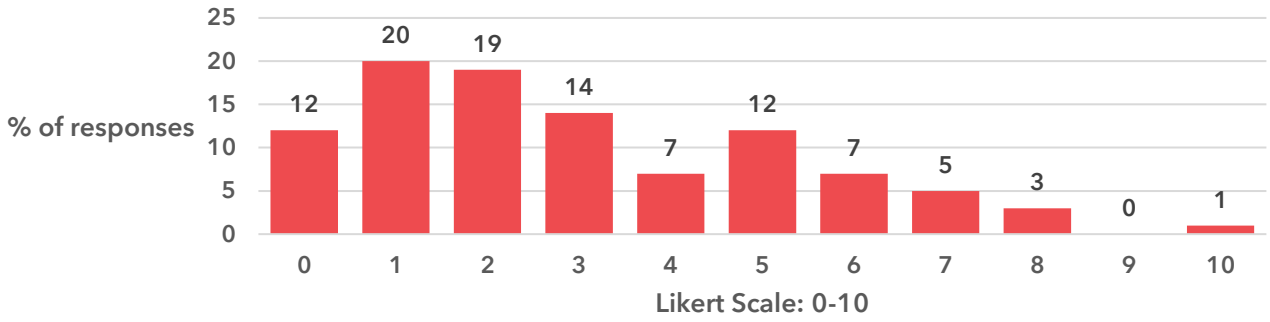
> ***The only times we talk about Asian contributions to Canadian history is often from a perspective of victimization. … We're always exploring from a point of victimization and helplessness. And then it's white saviorism, where white Canadians change their mind and start to love our [Asian] culture.***

Anti-racist scholars assert that accurate teachings of a nation's dark histories must be taught so students can grapple with how these atrocities shape the present society (An, 2022; Coloma, 2013 Crenshaw, 2021). When students are taught only about marginalization through historical contexts of victimization, it not only fails to showcase narratives of resilience, but it also portrays racism and oppression as something that happened in the past. This deceptively implies that society is equal today and the discussions move away from examining how systemic barriers impact different minoritized identities such as Asians (Kumashiro, 2004). The focus instead becomes a neoliberal lens that emphasizes individual factors such as effort and attitude as the ultimate qualities for achieving success in schools, ignoring privileges such as intergenerational wealth and social capital. When such ideologies are normalized and not critically examined, it leads to the erasure of the current struggles and harm experienced by racialized people, including Asian communities. Picower (2021) describes how curriculum can often function to maintain dominant ideologies if the realities of

oppression are not examined through the lens of critical consciousness. Hence it is imperative that lesson plans, curriculum content and representation, and pedagogies used by educators go beyond Asian representation in history and focus on the diverse experiences of Asian Canadians, including their significant contributions to the nation currently.

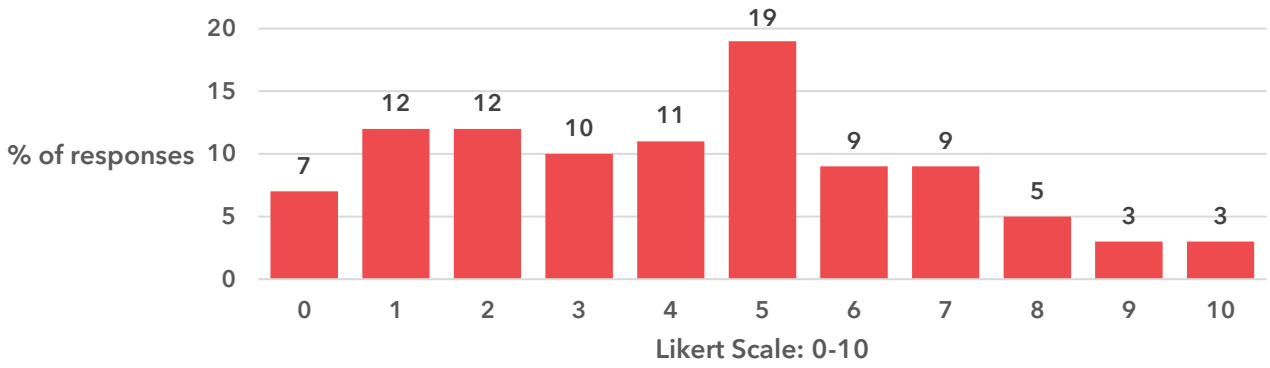
Part of the survey data included Likert scale questions (range 0 - 10) that asked students and educators 'to what extent has the district and/or school focused on Asian representation in curriculum that amplify and affirm Asian identities and diasporas?' Participants responded by selecting a number from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." Results showed the overall average response for educators was 3.04, while the average for students was 4.26 (see Figures 1 and 2 below for more details). Both groups felt that Asian representation in curriculum was low.

Figure 1. ***Educators' Responses to Asian Representation in Curriculum.***



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of educators' responses to the question 'to what extent has the district and/or school focused on Asian representation in curriculum that amplify and affirm Asian identities and diasporas?' The overall average response for educators was 3.04, while the mode was 1.

Figure 2. ***Students' Responses to Asian Representation in Curriculum.***



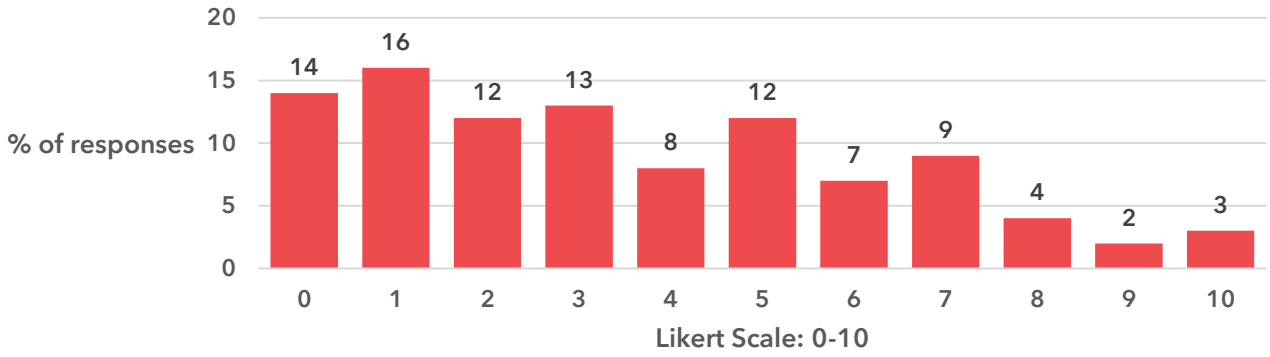
Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of students' responses to the question 'to what extent has the district and/or school focused on Asian representation in curriculum that amplify and affirm Asian identities and diasporas?' The overall average response for students was 4.26, while the mode was 5.

These significantly low rankings substantiate the qualitative responses within the surveys and the stories shared via focus groups.

Sub-Theme 1.2: The Need to Disrupt the Checklist Approach: Beyond Assemblies, Celebrations, and Holidays

Numerous students revealed that anti-Asian racism was briefly mentioned at a surface level at an occasional assembly or presentation. As one student stated, "*Besides a quick mention in the Safe Schools presentation, I have not seen much regarding dismantling anti-Asian racism in YRDSB.*" This is a performative checklist approach which is problematic in which anti-Asian hate is publicly declared as unacceptable by schools. The school checks it off the to-do list and the issue is never addressed or discussed again. As noted by one student, "*Other than some assemblies about general bullying … there is ZERO [sic] classes and course materials focused on dismantling anti-Asian racism*." Quantitative survey results corroborate these narratives. Students responded with a low mean of 3.54 when asked 'to what extent have your classes and course materials focused on dismantling anti-Asian racism?' See Figure 3 below for details.

Figure 3. ***Students' Responses to Course Materials on Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism***.



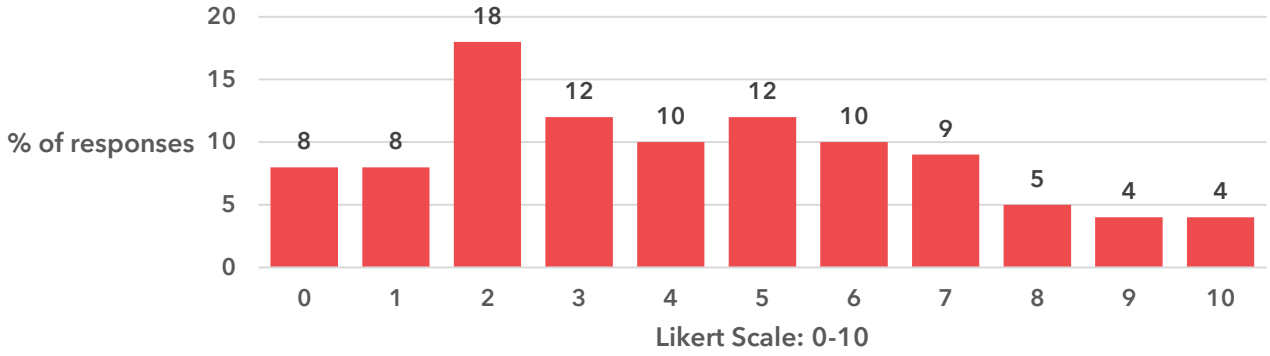
Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of students' responses to the question 'to what extent have your classes and course materials focused on dismantling anti-Asian racism?' The overall average response was 3.54, while the mode was 1.

Based on students' responses, Asian perspectives were also highlighted through cultural holidays such as Diwali and Lunar New Year, or events like Asian heritage month. One student expressed that, "*Asian topics are brought up, but only during Asian-heritage month and special holidays for Asians.*"

> ***Other students further emphasized this point by sharing that, "… occasionally I'll see a poster or drawing in the hallways when holidays like the Moon Festival happens, but besides that I don't see much." … "Samosa sales are often talked about in the announcements."***

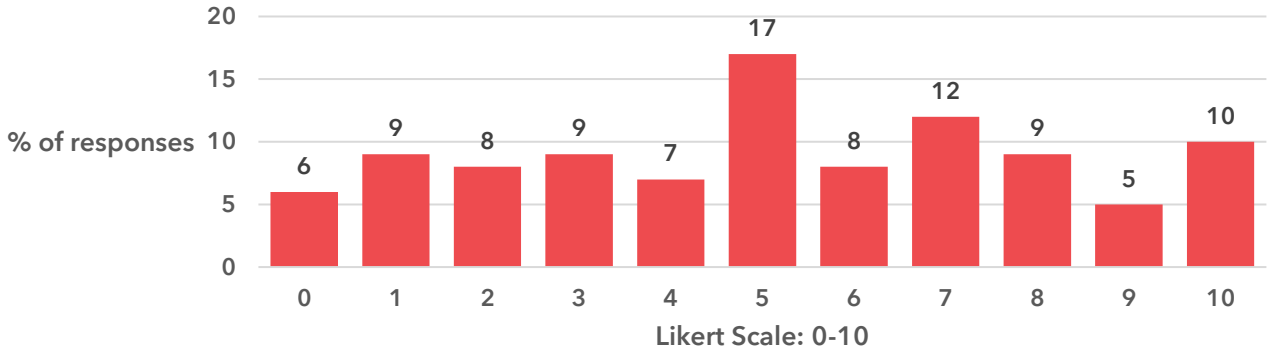
The average response was 4.25 and 5.2 for educators and students, respectively, when asked 'to what extent does the physical environment within your school have visible representation of Asians and their cultures?' Visible representations would include bulletin boards, displays of resources, and materials in the hallway. See Figures 4 and 5 below for more details.

Figure 4. ***Educators' Responses to Asian Representation in Physical Environment.***



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of educators' responses to the question 'to what extent does the physical environment within your school have visible representation of Asians and their cultures?' The overall average response for educators was 4.25, while the mode was 2.

Figure 5. ***Students' Responses to Asian Representation in Physical Environment.***



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of students' responses to the question 'to what extent does the physical environment within your school have visible representation of Asians and their cultures?' The overall average response for students was 5.2, while the mode was 5.

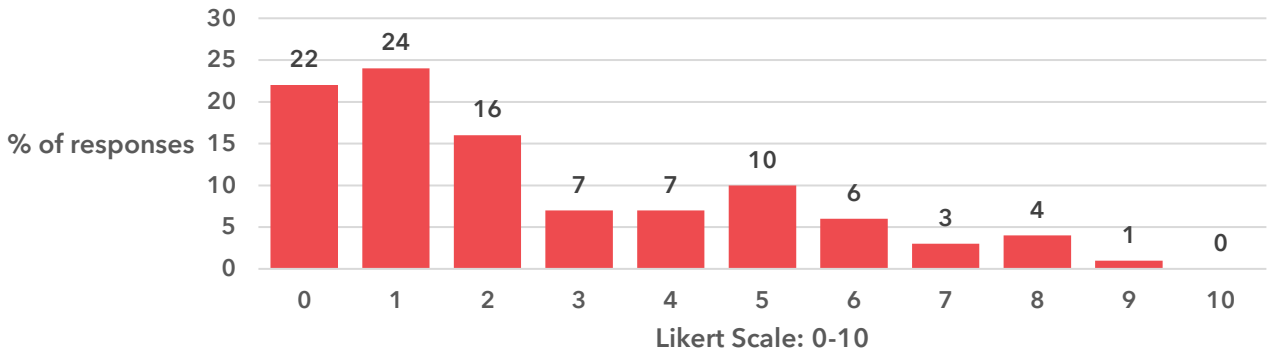
Although the recognition of Asian holidays and events can build connections among students and families, when celebrations are not acknowledged through culturally responsive approaches, it potentially depicts a group as monolithic. In certain cases, it can even lead to the perpetuation of stereotypes, depending on the type of representation made, by whom, and the extent of its authenticity. Traditions and practises often differ among families of similar ethnicities, therefore understanding the significance and worldview underlying each holiday is critical. And most importantly, focusing solely on Asian events and celebrations fails to address the core issues of racism, barriers, and discrimination created by oppressive systems. Research from Lei and Guo (2022) outline that "multiculturalism tolerates cultural difference but

does not challenge an unjust society premised on white supremacy" (p. 1). Hence, curriculum and instruction must go beyond multicultural appreciation events, and delve deeper into heart-felt equity work that is embodied and actualized. In other words, although assemblies, celebrations, and awareness about holidays is a good starting point, it is not a destination for a school board which wants to be inclusive and a leader in challenging systemic inequities and social injustices. Discussions about minoritized identities need to include critical reflections and dialogue about how systemic inequities lead to inequality of opportunity, even now in 2023 in our Canadian society. More importantly, what can everyone do in their various positions, accessing power and privilege to challenge such inequities and injustices to establish more inclusive schools.

Sub-Theme 1.3: The Spiritual and Emotional Labour of Constantly Leading by Being the Token Representation

Educators were asked 'to what extent have you received training or professional development (PD) related to dismantling anti-Asian racism in YRDSB?' The average response from educators was very low at 2.56. See below Figure 6 for more details.

Figure 6. ***Educators' Responses to PD on Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism.***



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of educators' responses to the question 'to what extent have you received training or professional development related to dismantling anti-Asian racism in YRDSB?' The overall average response for educators was 2.56, while the mode was 1.

Participants shared how they themselves as Asian identities often had to initiate, lead, and champion the work in dismantling anti-Asian racism, and while doing so endured emotional and spiritual labour that was not valued nor recognized by leaders in their schools. Often the work was "voluntold" in which Asian members were asked as the token representation within the school and in some cases even expected to do the work. This included simple tasks such as setting up bulletin boards to more major responsibilities like delivering PD sessions about Asian discrimination. This was reported by a considerable number of educators. For example, one teacher described an incident about *"a slide deck with some information about the history of anti-Asian racism [for] professional development to our whole school, but instead [administrators] turned it over to a handful of voluntold teachers to deliver to their own colleagues."*

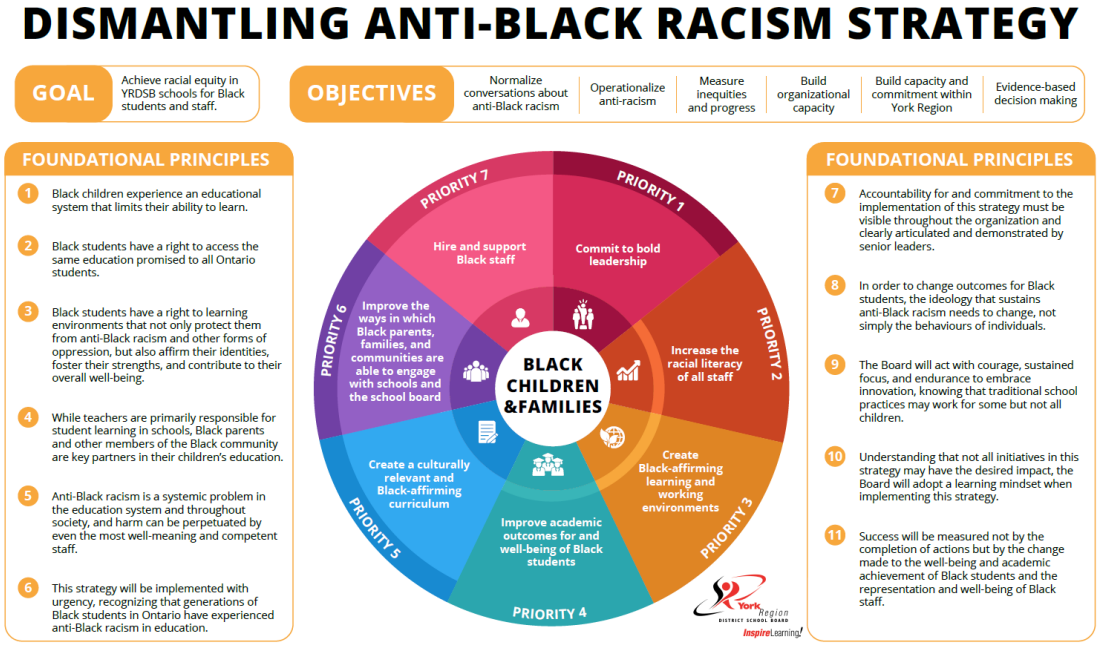
> ***Another educator stated, "It falls on the Asian educators to take on the responsibility [to address anti-Asian racism] when it really needs to be a partnership. I don't always feel that there are allies around."***

Educators expressed repeatedly that they themselves have to be responsible for leading this critical work because the board has done very little systematically. This work must engage non-Asian identities as allies to challenge systemic inequities in YRDSB and to show solidarity. As another teacher emphasized, *"Individually as teachers we have done this [dismantle anti-Asian racism work] because the board hasn't done anything to affirm Asian identities and diasporas."* Essentially, when there is Asian representation in the curriculum/instruction, it rarely focuses on addressing anti-Asian racism, and much of the critical work is championed by committed educators, and not systematically supported by the district.

Sub-Theme 1.4: Lack of Systemic Response by the Senior Team to Address Anti-Asian Racism

A large number of respondents from surveys and the focus groups felt that YRDSB responded with urgency after the George Floyd murder in May 2020 to create a plan of action to create safer spaces of belonging for educators, students, and staff to address anti-Black racism (see Figure 7 below for an overview of the *Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy*). Yet, many respondents expressed that they felt anti-Asian racism, even when intensified and very explicit during the COVID-19 pandemic, was not treated as a systemic issue nor addressed as a priority by the leadership team through a collective response.

Figure 7. ***Overview of Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy in YRDSB.***



(screenshot taken from YRDSB website)

YRDSB's Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy (DABRS) was commended in which educators stated this was a positive direction from the senior team, and a priority that was undeniably needed to affirm Black excellence. Respondents felt a similar approach was needed to address anti-Asian racism rather than dismissing it as occasional acts of bullying or violence.

Educators from the focus group shared that there was strong pressure and support from YRDSB senior leaders to address anti-Black racism in schools and classrooms. Educators recalled the ongoing district-wide sessions devoted to the implementation of the DABRS, in which all sessions were mandatory. It was also compulsory to incorporate the DABRS in the school improvement plans. YRDSB invested time, resources, and finances, and had a clear vision and scope for this critical work. However, participants felt that the same efforts were not reciprocated to create safer spaces for Asian identities. As one of the teachers stated in the focus group, *"Our focus on dismantling anti-Black Racism in YRDSB is very important work, but the focus on dismantling anti-Asian racism should not be forgotten."* Another educator noted, *"Lots of PD sessions on Black and Indigenous racism - which was much needed, but I have not been part of anti-Asian racism [PD] in YRDSB."* When one marginalized group is supported, it uplifts all other equity-deserving groups because it promotes understanding of how oppression uniquely impacts different identities. Accordingly, to cultivate a culture of unity and cross-racial solidarity, YRDSB must do more intentional work to systematically acknowledge anti-Asian racism during an extraordinarily distressing time for Asian people around the world.

A large number of respondents felt there was little effort to dismantle anti-Asian hate in the midst of the pandemic when anti-Asian violence was erupting at an alarming rate. YRDSB Asian members were experiencing harmful xenophobic sentiments. Asian students were blamed for COVID-19 and many described how they were called "*Chinese virus.*" There were numerous accounts where students were told to *"go back to your country"* and mockingly asked "*do you eat dogs and bats?*" One student reported being spit on and many were treated as if they were infected with the virus with stereotypical comments made towards them such as: *"Stay away from me, you're Chinese. I don't want to get sick,"* and "*They're the ones who started this pandemic! Let's walk away, I don't want to deal with these germs."*

If there were strategies to combat anti-Asian racism, it was not conducted district-wide, but rather championed by committed educators at the local level, as described by a teacher, *"PD has been done at a very local level within my school …Nothing else beyond that from YRDSB."* Some PD sessions were developed by Asian affinity groups such as Supporting East Asian Students (SEAS), where attendance was voluntary. This was explained by a number of educators, "*Attended a number of SEAS events on my own time to learn and connect with East Asian identities… There were no strategies on dismantling anti-Asian racism*." Another educator described the lack of a coherent plan, "*...there were sessions arranged by the SEAS core team, but it's not board wide. Only those that have asked to be on the mailing list receive notifications."* An administrator revealed their concerns about YRDSB's nonchalant response to anti-Asian racism across the district:

Whenever this kind of work is done, it's done in our own time, never is there finances ... So it's extra work that we do, because we are committed to it, and we believe in it. But I don't know if the board truly values it in the sense that they do not support the educators that took hours and hours of their time to do this particular piece.

Subsection 1.4a: Over Surveillance of Asian Communities

Systemic anti-Asian racism was prevalent at the onset of the pandemic, when YRDSB prohibited mask-wearing and disregarded, or at least did not take into consideration, how this impacted Asian members. Several participants from the community focus group, as well as educators and students discussed major concerns about how YRDSB disallowed mask-wearing at the very start of the pandemic. Under the direction of public health, YRDSB communicated that mask-wearing could potentially cause anxiety among students and therefore prohibited mask-wearing in schools. However, for many Asians, mask-wearing has been part of their regular behaviour long before the pandemic started. Wearing medical masks is a cultural norm in several Asian communities. A number of participants resented not being allowed to wear masks, and felt anxious and frustrated when they were forced to change their cultural behaviours to abide by colonial logic. An administrator recalled this time vividly:

The board told us to discourage students from wearing a mask… and almost all Asian students in my school wear masks. The board's reason was because students wearing a mask is causing panic. But they [Asian students] normally wear masks during flu season. And as administrators, we were told to call home and talk to the families… tell your kid to not wear a mask.

This is a clear example of over-surveillance of racialized bodies, through securing white colonial mentality and ignoring marginalized voices.

Throughout this theme, we offer indisputable stories that illustrate the lack of systemic response to address anti-Asian racism. Feelings of invisibility were prevalent among Asian educators, students, community members, and staff, because they felt unheard, unsupported, and unseen, especially during the height of the pandemic when they were fearful for their own safety and the safety of their community. Moreover, when Asian identities were focused on in schools or the district school board, the physical and emotional work was primarily shouldered by the same people experiencing the anti-Asian racism.

THEME #1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Investment in People

i) **Mentorship Programs:** YRDSB should further invest in mentorship opportunities and district wide mentorship programs specifically designed to empower Asian students and staff, as well as all racialized and marginalized students and staff across the district. It is important to create and nurture opportunities for Asian and non-Asian educators, administrators, and students to support one another with implementing more empowering Asian representation within the curriculum.

ii) **Professional Training and Learning:** In addition, targeted professional training and learning is needed for all staff, including administrators and educators, to become aware of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) topics that intentionally deepen understanding of anti-Asian racism.

iii) **Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism Advisory Circle:** Creating a Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism Advisory Circle made up of representation from students, parents, community agencies, educators, administrators, and school trustees will help identify on-going issues and how to support specific schools based on unique community needs.

School staff must reflect the population YRDSB serves which is why representation is so important as it fosters creating more inclusive environments.

2) Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) Compensation and Funding

Compensation should be given to educators who continuously lead EDI efforts, including initiatives that address anti-Asian racism. An annual budget for EDI should be allocated specifically for work that supports the dismantling of anti-Asian racism, as well as more awards and recognitions to celebrate the work of students, educators, and administrators that address systemic barriers for equity-deserving students. Training does not always have to be formalized. A monthly drop-in support group is recommended to allow people to share their on-going experiences and bounce ideas off one another. This will lead to dialogue and important conversations from multiple perspectives which will promote relationship-building amongst educators, staff, and administrators. If all initiatives are constantly formalized, it can take away from engagement and open dialogue. Furthermore, to facilitate doing this work with the community and offer guidance for teachers and administrators who may not know where to start, more partnerships need to be created with community agencies to lead programming that affirms Asian identities in schools. This will also create continuity of representation within schools as well as build relationships with other stakeholders who contribute to the school-community interface.

3) Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism Strategy (DAARS)

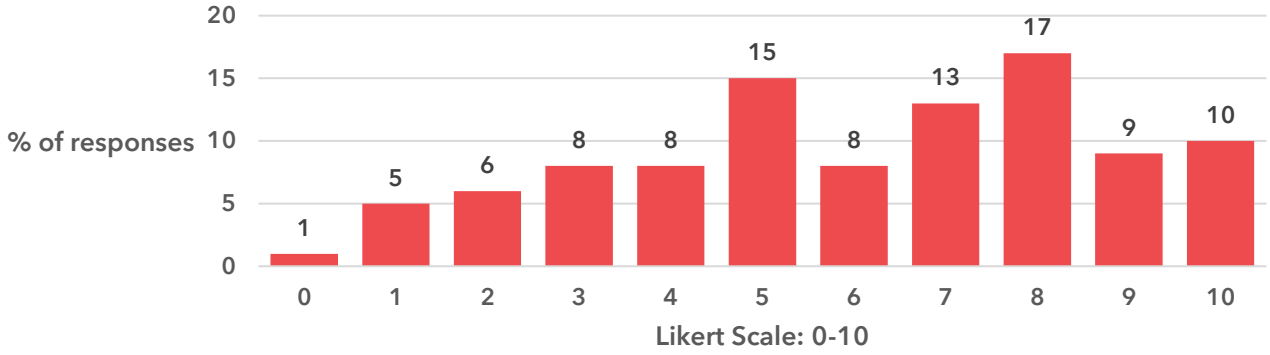
YRDSB needs to invest in staff and finances to develop a four-year "Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism Strategy" with updates and progress provided annually to the public to ensure transparency and institutional accountability. The Dismantling Anti-Asian Advisory Circle should play an integral part of this process, as the strategy needs to be initiated and implemented from the ground up versus top down. A draft should be presented to the community and the greater public as part of consultations to finalize the strategy, including its vision, foundational principles, priorities, actions, and monitoring and accountability framework.

THEME #2: LOW SENSE OF BELONGING

Although students and educators generally felt welcomed at school, there is a low sense of belonging by Asian members in YRDSB.

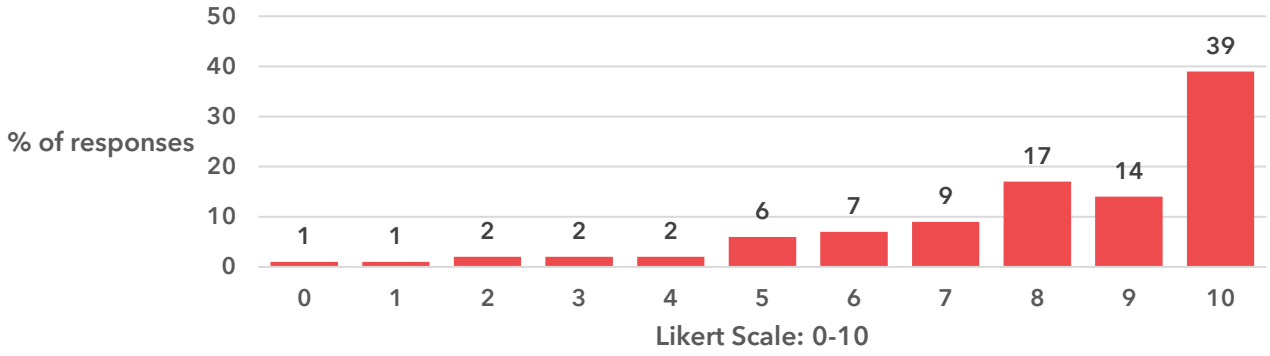
When asked 'to what extent do you feel comfortable, welcomed, and safe in your school/workplace?', the average response from educators was 6.09 and from students 8.16. See Figures 8 and 9 below for details.

Figure 8. ***Educators' Responses to Feeling Welcomed in Workplace.***



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of educators' responses to the question 'to what extent do you feel comfortable, welcomed, and safe in your workplace?' The overall average response for educators was 6.09, while the mode was 8.

Figure 9. ***Students' Responses to Feeling Welcomed in School.***



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of students' responses to the question 'to what extent do you feel comfortable, welcomed, and safe in your workplace?' The overall average response for students was 8.16, while the mode was 10.

Students and staff generally felt welcomed at school yet when we delved deeper into the qualitative responses that justified their ranking coupled with the stories shared in the focus group sessions, there was an emerging theme that they felt they did not belong.

The qualitative open-ended responses to the survey questions and focus group discussions highlighted a significant number of anti-Asian experiences, which negatively impacted participants' sense of belonging in YRDSB schools and workplaces. Findings indicate that various factors impact participants' sense of belonging, including the normalization of microaggressions, butchering names and misnaming Asians, model minority myth, perpetual foreigner syndrome, and location within the district. The following sub-themes are reported in detail.

Sub-Theme 2.1: Normalization of Microaggressions by Not Addressing It as a Systemic Problem

> ***"To be honest I never realized these were acts of racism until now as they were so normalized to me."***
>
> **YRDSB student**

The normalization of racial microaggressions in the school context undoubtedly has damaging effects on students, educators, staff, and community members. Through survey responses and focus groups, many expressed that acts of anti-Asian racism were either not addressed or dismissed as a joke without any consequences for the perpetrators. This can contribute to a lower sense of belonging and internalized oppression such as people hating their identity and their cultural practices. Research from Choi et al. (2021) gives evidence that feelings of isolation, internalized racism, and lower sense of belonging are associated with depressive symptoms among Asian students. Essentially, normalizing microaggressions enables everyday racism to exist without it ever being recognized or challenged as a systemic problem. This was evident at the height of the pandemic when Asians were being blamed for COVID-19. The following subsections examine specific types of everyday microaggressions experienced from various participants shared through surveys and focus groups.

Subsection 2.1a: Butchering Names and Misnaming Asians

Our study found that microaggressions regarding the butchering of Asian names and misnaming Asians were prevalent in everyday interactions. These incidents were shared by participants from all groups including students, educators, community members, and staff across YRDSB. We analyzed frequent reports of microaggressions involving the constant butchering of Asian names. As one student noted, *"teachers … pronouncing my name wrong and not correcting themselves after I pronounced it correctly."* Names are an essential aspect of one's identity, and the normalization of butchering names forces Asians to whitewash their names to avoid social isolation and embarrassing moments such as when friends laugh

at them when a supply teacher has to read all the names for attendance purposes. This is illustrated when teachers described how Asians feel shame about their names and by extension who they are as part of daily realities of attending schools:

> ***"I had one student who didn't want her real name pronounced the way her parents told her. She said to make it sound more white and please use the short form" and "... many Asian students in the school have anglicized or [use] English names and ask staff to refer to them as such due to internalized racism."***

Equally damaging is confusing and misnaming Asian people for other Asians because this leads to feelings of invisibility, essentially erasing their identities and individualities and perceiving them as a monolithic social group. Participants shared personal stories about being misnamed chronically for another Asian person because *"all you people look alike."* These incidents were not one-off isolations, but rather happened persistently. As one educator stated, *"... because it [being misnamed for another Asian teacher] kept happening, until I had to say, don't you know who I am yet? I just felt very disheartened that it didn't stop."* Repeatedly being misnamed is harmful and racist and when these microaggressions are normalized and chronic, it compromises Asian people's sense of inclusion and belonging.

Subsection 2.1b: Model Minority Myth

The model minority myth is the belief that all Asians achieve universal success in their careers and in education, specifically in the field of math and science, rooted in hard working values they possess. This stereotype became popular in the 1960s in the midst of the civil rights movement. Its ideological intentions stem from white supremacy with the goal to pit one marginalized group against another based on the myth of meritocracy, referring to how hard you work to achieve access to opportunities, without any regards for how systemic barriers impact inequality of opportunities (Battiste, 2013; Eizadirad, 2019; Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). By contrast, prior to the 1960s, 'yellow peril' was the dominant ideology, which viewed Asian people as savages and a direct threat to western society. Although the model minority myth may be considered a "positive" stereotype by some, it has destructive consequences, as it paints all Asians with a monolithic brush and can lead to serious mental health issues (Shih et al., 2019).

The model minority myth was largely experienced by all participants through constant microaggressions and invalidations experienced. Significant number of incidents were shared about Asians being the model minority. The large number of references to the model minority myth gives evidence that Asian members of YRDSB struggle to be their authentic selves if they do not fit the stereotype. An educator recalled when

a fellow teacher stated to them, *"oh I didn't know Asians knew how to dance; I thought all they knew how to do was study."* In another example, an educator explained "*... one of my co-workers who I respect dearly, tells me like, you know, when I look at Asian parents and Asian kids, they're always ahead. And this is something that I envy.*" The co-worker believed they were complimenting and positively promoting Asian identities, and blatantly unaware of their bias. Sadly, feelings of shame, embarrassment, and reduced self-worth are often the consequences when Asians contradict the model minority stereotype, exacerbating their low sense of belonging.

One teacher discussed how their counter narrative of the model minority made them feel unsafe, *"the idea of being a non-stereotypical Asian is in itself a danger. Like, not fitting into that narrative of what we're supposed to be. It creates an unsafe space for us because it makes other people uncomfortable."*

Responses from students demonstrated the pervasiveness of the model minority myth related to math class. One student alluded to their deficit in math, "*As a South Asian with glasses people seem to have high expectations from me in academics. Math has been my weak subject, however lots of people think I know complex subjects in math*." And other students shared, "*during math classes, many others go to the Asian students because they are supposedly 'smarter' without reasoning."* A number of model minority microaggressions happened in the context of joking. One student explained how a teacher joked about their math mistake centering the math error in the model minority myth, "*My teacher made a joke that i [sic] 'should've gotten the answer right' to a question in math.*" While another student stated they "*had an experience with a teacher in YRDSB saying 'Asians are like dogs*'," implying that Asians are hard working.

Finally, one student expressed their frustration with this prevalent stereotype stating, *"The world needs to stop thinking that we're academically driven only. We like music, we like gym, we like art, we are not just growing up to be doctors and engineers only."*

Subsection 2.1c: Perpetual Foreigner

The perpetual foreigner syndrome is a form of xenophobia where racialized people are not viewed as 'real' Canadians, and this is perpetuated through acts of otherizing. Research suggests that among Asian American [and by extension Asian Canadian] students, the "perpetual foreigner stereotype was a significant predictor of identity conflict and lower sense of belonging … [and] lower hope and life satisfaction" (Kim, et al., 2011, p. 289). One parent described how their child and other Asian students in the school were singled out by educators because many of the Asian students accessed the hybrid classroom via online, *"The teacher asked 'what happened to all the Asian parents, why don't they allow their kids to go back to school [in-person]?'... This was not just one occasion, multiple occasions, and multiple teachers gave us the same impression."* Despite their legitimate reasons for accessing online learning in a hybrid classroom, many of the Asian students were made to feel otherized, based on these repeated remarks. Asian parents felt isolated and judged by educators and leaders for accessing online learning which was offered by YRDSB, as well as across the province, as part of a provincial requirement.

Normalization of perpetual foreigner microaggressions was strongly evident throughout our data analysis. Our study's key findings give strong evidence of how the perpetual foreigner syndrome permeates YRDSB schools and workplaces on a regular basis. An educator stated that their constant experiences of being othered *"have left a severe impact on my mental health, sense of belonging and self worth."* Throughout our analysis, we coded a significant number of microaggressions where study participants were viewed as the 'other.' To illustrate how Asian members were otherized, below are just a fraction of examples taken from survey and transcript data. Undeniably, these microaggressions are experienced repeatedly, resulting in a diminished sense of belonging and internalized racism. Within our focus groups, many expressed strong emotions including crying and in some cases breaking down as part of sharing such sentiments from their traumatic experiences.

Examples of students sharing how they were perceived as a perpetual foreigner:

- *"... students at the school have called me a dog eater."*
- *"brown people get referred to as 'curry munchers'."*
- *"Asian[s] are made fun of because people think they eat dogs, but others including myself, unfortunately tend to laugh it off and not consider it bullying. I mean even I don't, because I believe at this point it's become so normalized and it's quite unfortunate."*
- *"... it's honestly pretty common to mock [Asian] accents."*
- *"People would ask me if I eat different animals (the stereotypical cats, dogs, bats etc)."*
- *"... pulled their eyes back and said ching chong, mocking my language."*
- *"... one time I was called a 'ching chong' I ignored the person who said that."*
- *"... it's the Asians [sic] fault that the virus exists and we should be punished."*
- *"In middle school people would blame me for COVID."*
- *"Oftentimes people say things like 'You're good-looking for a brown person'"*
- *"...the boys would stretch the corners of their eyes outward and mock Chinese speech."*
- *"was told I looked like other Asian [sic] in my class for a whole year."*
- *"saying Asian [sic] slurs such as the ch slurs."*
- *"Someone called me a ch- - -."*
- *"... there are kids who look at Asian woman [sic] like they are diamonds. They think all Asian woman [sic] are really beautiful."*
- *"As Sri Lankans we are seen as Indian even though we are a completely different country, we feel forgotten."*
- *"Having a nine-eleven joke said to me."*

- *"...being constantly mocked is normalized… my culture's accent has been mocked. People have made fun of my food and culture as a whole, with teachers being oblivious to this. Yet, they preach that racism to anyone is wrong, but ignore us."*

Examples of educators sharing how they were perceived as a perpetual foreigner:

- *"I've heard other adults say 'it feels like a third world country in this school'."*
- *"These people just need to learn English. We can't keep coddling them."* (A statement from a teacher colleague)
- *"'Oh wow! When did you move to Canada?' referring to my English"*
- *"I've had teacher colleagues (non-Asian) who have questioned why I'm still wearing a mask."*
- *"You look like my nanny."* (comment from a student to a teacher)
- *"I've been asked 'do you know anyone that is looking for work as a cleaning lady?'"*
- *"... they [colleagues] perceive all Muslims to be non-tolerant or anti-Jewish or anti-gay. This has created a tension so thick at times that you're stuck in this environment of anti-Muslim hate."*
- *"Someone told me 'I went and asked my Asian friend why they don't brush their teeth in their culture'."*
- *"I'm sorry about (student name). His culture teaches him to disrespect women."* (comment from a teacher colleague)
- *"... we have a high international student population (mainly from China), some teachers expressed fear of catching COVID from them, 'Why is the Board letting them come? All they want is their money'."*
- *"Students making remarks like 'Corona' towards Asian educators and nothing came from it. It was not addressed."*
- *"I'm also asked why I don't have an accent, again, assuming I was not born in Canada."*

Examples of non-teaching staff sharing how they were perceived as a perpetual foreigner:

- *"They've never made the effort to pronounce my last name … it's something that doesn't make me feel valued as a team member and it hurts my feelings."*
- *"... people often assume that I wasn't born here. Like I've said before, I've never been to Sri Lanka, which is where my parents were born."*
- *"We had a series of training on Islamophobia, but in terms of Islamophobia I feel like… no one was truly interested in that training."*
- *"... these two girls performing a form of Indian classical dance… so they're playing the song and like it's not an easy form of dance to learn. But the two girls were dancing, and everyone in the audience was laughing at them."*

- *"I know what a hijab is. I know what a turban is, and I understand the difference between the two, and very often I see my white colleagues not understanding the difference… I was talking to my colleague about someone in the board that wore a hijab and I know that she's Muslim, and my colleague called it a turban … I was quite offended."*

Examples of community members sharing how they were perceived as a perpetual foreigner:

- *"...they're laughing at my kids' lunch, that kind of thing. So, then they feel like, oh, I want a white lunch. I don't want Asian lunches."*
- *"English is not your first language you know, you may have some barriers and you don't understand, right? Some of the teachers brush it off. … When they talk to other parents, it's different. You see the difference … the way they talk to you."*
- *"... for the teenagers, especially for Asian teenagers… They are nice, but can never be cool. Nice is not cool. . . Yeah, very difficult for them [to fit in], more difficult for Asian teenagers."*
- *"... people asking where I'm really from or people even guessing where I'm from. They would just come up to me and like greet me in Korean or Japanese, and I'm not."*
- *"...some teachers might think Asian parents are being ignorant, like super irresponsible parents, [because they] don't respond to teacher's notes, and don't bring their children what they need. But it's really just because they don't understand."* (referring to language barrier)

Sub-Theme 2.2: Geography and Location Matter: Different Schools Have Different Needs

Based on comments made by students and educators, lived experiences differed according to geography and postal code where the school is situated. This reflects each community's unique needs, demographics, and the extent impacted by systemic barriers. We found students and educators felt greater inclusion and higher levels of belonging in spaces that were more diverse or occupied a higher density of Asian populations. Students described their feelings of inclusion, *"At my school, there is so much diversity that it is easy to feel accepted and welcomed"* and *"I feel extremely welcomed in my school, 90% I would say of my grade is of Asian descent (majority Chinese and Indian). … so I can blend in with them very well."* By contrast, students in schools that had fewer people who shared the same race and/or ethnicity experienced higher levels of isolation. This was illustrated by students' comments, *"there aren't many Asian students so sometimes it's like I'm alone"* and *"I constantly ask myself where I fit in this world because there are clubs for other ethnicities, but none for mine."*

This does not mean that demographics alone is the exclusive factor that creates feelings of belonging. For schools that have smaller Asian student populations, it means there needs to be greater intentionality to demonstrate positive Asian representations through hiring of Asian educators and administrators, diverse curriculum content, and engagement with the surrounding community such as partnerships with community agencies and nonprofits that provide family supports and continuity of care to students outside of school hours on weekday evenings and weekends.

Similarly, educators felt safer and more belonging when they worked in diverse populations, as noted by a teacher, *"My department has had more Asian educators in recent years, which does contribute to the sense of belonging within my teaching department."* On the contrary, educators shared how they navigated spaces where they were the sole Asian or one of the few racialized people, *"... having other colleagues who are Asian makes a huge difference. This is not the same in all areas of YRDSB. In the [undisclosed area] I was the only Asian and faced much racism."* Racialized people who experience isolation often react to their social circumstances by questioning their identity, resulting in feelings of immense pressure to conform to the dominant culture and ideologies (Trieu, 2019). An example of this is revealed by an educator, *"My experience in [undisclosed area] was extremely concerning. Most of your success depends on whether you fit in with the predominantly white, pre-existing norms and social groups."* This stems from internalized racism that forces racialized people to become whitewashed, where they dissociate themselves from their ethnic identity to feel a sense of belonging to the dominant culture (Bauman, 2013; Chen & Wu, 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Liang et al., 2018; Trieu, 2019).

THEME #2 RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Reporting Anti-Asian Discrimination, Racism, and Hate

Awareness campaigns at the start of each school year for students, parents, educators, administrators, and other stakeholders must include clarity regarding what constitutes microaggressions, discrimination, and acts of violence and how to report these acts through existing tools at YRDSB, as well as the importance of reporting. This is critical for the Asian community as anti-Asian hate is often dismissed as a "joke" or highlighted as a "positive" stereotype. The district needs to review existing reporting tools, i.e., RESOLVE and Report IT. Currently, only administrators are authorized to input incidents of hate in RESOLVE, and Report IT is designated for reporting students' inappropriate behaviours, and not staff members. Hence, incidents involving employees at the board are largely communicated to the principal or superintendent, making it difficult or impossible to report anonymously. There should be an option where incidents can be reported anonymously to shift the historic underreporting. This would encourage greater participation and mitigate fear from reprisals. Instructions on how to navigate the platform and submit reports should be presented in various languages through translations, making it accessible to the community so that English language learners and new immigrants to the country feel supported. Once a month, different EDI policies at the district level should be highlighted and shared with all stakeholders via online newsletters and the YRDSB website. Awareness is the key in creating an inclusive culture where everyone has a shared responsibility to improve teaching and learning conditions both within schools and in the larger community surrounding schools. At the district level, data should be collected geographically to identify schools or municipalities where there are a greater number of incidents reported. Those schools with higher incidents of harm should be surrounded with more resources and funding allocation to address the root causes of the problem. Overall, statistics both at the board level and by geography should be shared with the public through an annual report as well as the actions taken by the district. This helps to build trust with the community and ensures institutional accountability and transparency.

2) Foster a Sense of Belonging

To foster a greater sense of belonging for Asian members within YRDSB, an annual conference or symposium should be hosted that provides a platform for students, parents, educators, staff, and other community stakeholders to engage with various issues and topics impacting Asian identities. The ideal time would be mid way throughout the school year. Part of the day should be dedicated exclusively to Asian identity gatherings to facilitate mentorship opportunities and healing spaces (e.g., affinity groups can share their concerns and opportunities throughout the year for members to connect). The other components of the conference should be open to everyone as the content, presentations, and guest speakers provide opportunities for others to learn about anti-Asian racism and how to be an ally and work in solidarity with others to dismantle all forms of oppression in schools and in the community. Community agencies should also be invited to present and share the services they offer to support families. This would facilitate partnerships between schools and community agencies to create continuity of care as part of holistically supporting students and families and their unique needs within each geographical area.

3) EDI Virtual Online Hub

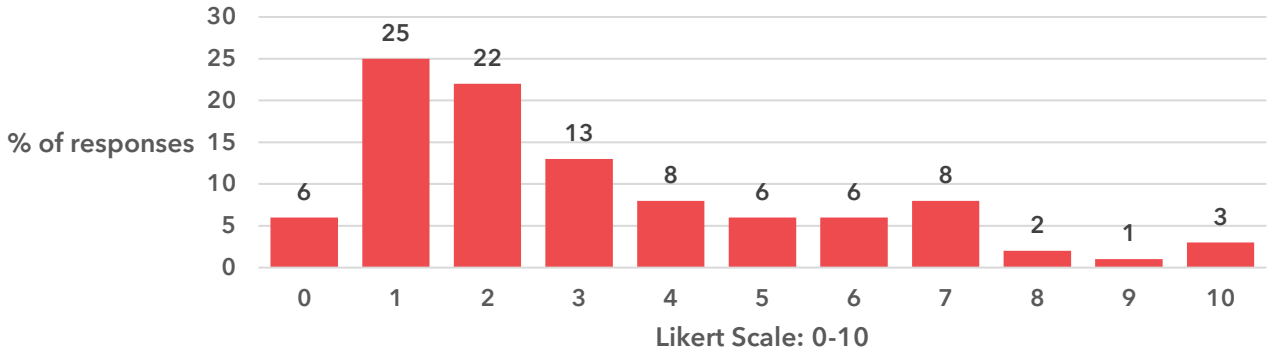
YRDSB should create an equity, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI) virtual online hub where educators, administrators, and staff can access leaders, speakers, educational content, elders, and other community members who can speak to their expertise and lived experiences around Asian issues and various EDI topics. The online hub should also highlight how to access various types of services available by community organizations. This will help people who do not know where to begin to connect with relevant people and organizations and ultimately support their local school needs. This initiative will also deepen people's understanding of intersectionality and help disrupt the notion that Asian identities are monolithic and all have the same needs.

THEME #3: LACK OF ASIAN STAFF REPRESENTATION

Diverse Asian representations are lacking among staff at all levels, and most notably in senior leadership positions.

When asked 'to what extent are Asian identities represented in senior leadership positions that impact policies, practices, and initiatives within YRDSB?', the average response by educators surveyed was very low at 3.19. This low average puts a spotlight on the structural racism that impacts the daily lives of Asian employees. See Figure 10 for details.

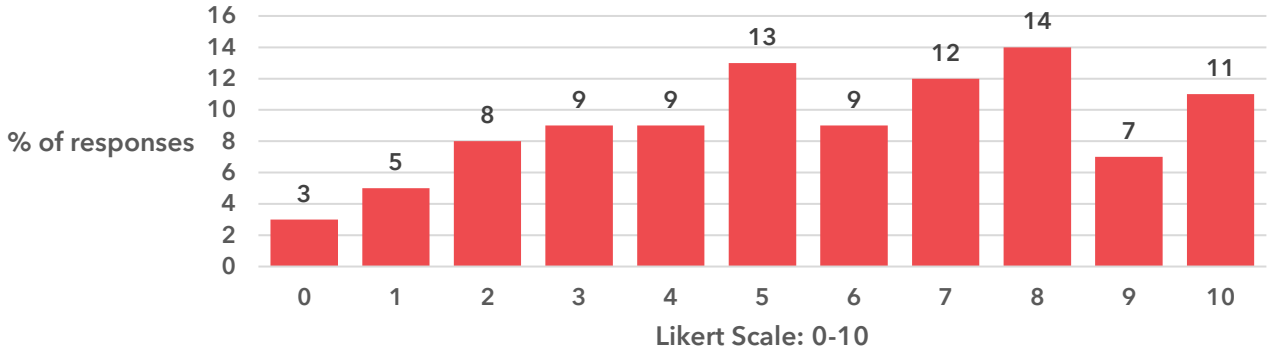
Figure 10. ***Educators' Responses to Asian Representation in Senior Leadership.***



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of educators' responses to the question 'to what extent are Asian identities represented in senior leadership positions that impact policies, practices, and initiatives within YRDSB?' The overall average response for educators was 3.19, while the mode was 1.

Similarly, when students were asked "to what extent do you see Asian leaders in your school (e.g., principal, vice-principal, lead teachers)?", the average response was 5.78. See Figure 11 for details.

Figure 11. ***Students' Responses to Asian Representation in Leadership***.



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of students' responses to the question 'to what extent do you see Asian leaders in your school (e.g., principal, vice-principal, lead teachers)?' The overall average response for students was 5.78, while the mode was 8.

This quantitative data aligned with what was expressed in the focus groups where there were numerous detailed accounts that described the lack of diverse Asian representation among staff across YRDSB, but most notably at senior levels. This is corroborated by YRDSB's Employment Equity Audit (Turner Consulting Group Inc., 2019). The Turner report revealed that 24% of YRDSB workforce are racialized, while 49% of the York Region population are racialized. By contrast, the report disclosed that white staff make up 67%, with 50% of York Region population identifying as white. Hence, employees of colour are underrepresented across YRDSB. The report further indicated that the largest gap in district staffing was in East Asian people, comprising only 7% of the workforce. These statistics substantiate our qualitative data, in which significant issues emerged about the lack of diverse Asian representation and barriers in place preventing Asian identities to advance or get access to those opportunities at the same rates compared to their white counterparts. This includes the following sub-themes which will be outlined in more detail below: siloing Asian-identifying educators in schools with high Asian student populations, tokenization of Asians, and the bamboo ceiling phenomenon.

Sub-Theme 3.1: Siloing Asian-identifying Educators in Schools with High Asian Student Populations

Across the nine municipalities of YRDSB, our survey results indicated that Markham, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan comprised the highest percentages of Asian students and educators. Almost 70% of Asian students indicated Markham as their school area, with almost 15% attending schools in Richmond hill, followed by Vaughan with approximately 11%. Similarly, the largest percentage of educators noted Markham as their workplace at almost 50%, followed by Richmond Hill at 15.09%, and Vaughan at 13.21%. It appears that intentional efforts have been made to hire Asian educators in these municipalities, as stated by an educator, *"Asian recruitment in YRDSB for advancement, hiring and promotion is very evident in densely populated areas with Asian families."* Despite such efforts for diversity hiring, YRDSB's equity employment audit found that "the [teacher diversity] gap is particularly large for East Asians and Southeast Asians as well as those from the Middle East and West Asia" (Turner Consulting Group Inc., 2019, p. 21). It is necessary to bridge the teacher diversity gap, where there are disparities between racialized teachers who serve racially diverse schools. Hiring educators that reflect the diverse student population is invaluable. This is illustrated by a teacher who stated:

I believe being able to speak Tamil helped me land my first LTO [long-term occasional] job. The school had predominantly Tamil speaking students, and they had no one on staff that could assist students and parents with translating. I was often called upon to translate.

Our findings show some unexpected consequences from focused recruitment of Asian educators in highly dense Asian municipalities. Although such endeavours have positive intentions, it can undermine the importance of diversity across all nine municipalities of YRDSB. When focusing on hiring Asians and other racialized educators only for diverse schools, they get overlooked for other communities, as they are solely recognized for schools that are racially diverse. School and system leaders must also consider the flip side, e.g., identifying the reasons for not sending racialized staff to particular schools. If Asian and other racialized staff are not being hired/promoted in particular areas of the board because they will almost certainly face discrimination and racism, these actions ultimately segregate staff and perpetuate systemic racism. Regardless of the racial identities of school populations, all students benefit from having racially diverse teachers, as one teacher stated, *"I believe that Asian staff need to be represented across all regions in order to create a norm for what it means to be Canadian."* Some educators believed they were discriminated against when applying to areas that were not racially diverse:

When applying to permanent contracts, I felt I was at a disadvantage by being a person from a minority background, specifically South East Asian. I felt this to be especially true when applying to postings made in specific areas. I received more offers to interview for schools in more diverse communities, and none in the aforementioned areas. However, people I know who received interviews and contracts in those areas were Caucasian.

Many educators further expressed that they are expected to conform to colonial ideologies (Kohn & Reddy, 2021) in terms of how to behave and carry themselves to be considered for promotion into leadership positions.

Sub-Theme 3.2: Tokenization of Asians in the Workplace

Representation of racialized staff across YRDSB is important because it cultivates inclusive workplaces where everyone can feel validated. Diversity in an organization allows for contributions that are varied and authentic perspectives to be valued, even if at times it makes people feel uncomfortable or uneasy. When districts intentionally bridge the teacher diversity gap, such deliberate efforts move towards safer spaces where students and families feel a greater sense of belonging and inclusion (Nervarez et al., 2019). Hiring just a few racialized staff does not equate to sincere representation nor does it guarantee power dynamics within a school that fosters inclusion. In other words, diversity of representation does not guarantee inclusion. Inclusion involves creation of relationships with students and their families to identify their

immediate and long-term needs, and then investing in providing them with a curriculum and services that are culturally reflective of who they are. This is revealed by educators who expressed, "*There needs to be representation of all Asian backgrounds/races on a board level not just 1 or 2 token faces*" and *"The Board's students are 49% Asian. This proportion is not reflected in its teaching or support staff. There are even fewer Asian administrators, and even fewer Asian people in positions of senior leadership."*

There is a fine line between tokenism and representation. Tokenism occurs when institutions hire a small number of underrepresented individuals to give the appearance of inclusion and diversity (Ruby, 2020). Essentially tokenism is a performative measure that ultimately fails to create spaces that foster culturally responsive practices.

Asian identities and diasporas are vastly rich and diverse. A number of participants disclosed that they often found themselves to be the token Asian in their school or at an event, and they were expected to speak on behalf of all other Asians. This is explained by a teacher who stated, *"I have experienced being the only Asian educator in the room and have felt like the 'token' voice for my minority group."* Others indicated that diverse representations of Asian people were lacking across the district. For example, hiring of East Asians does not represent all Asians. This is described by educators, *"I see very little representation of South Asian permanent teachers"* and *"It is evident that people who identify as Asian, especially South Asian are limited in numbers."*

Identity formation is not only influenced by race, but is impacted by a myriad of unique intersecting identities, such as ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, ability, intergenerational relationships, immigration history, languages and dialects spoken, amongst other factors. For this reason, the Asian population is deemed a highly heterogeneous group. Therefore, expecting the few Asian employees to be the voice for all Asian people is inequitable and can place them in positions where stereotypes are perpetuated.

Teachers disclosed their frustrations with this monolithic perspective stating that, *"[administrators] rely on the Asian staff to know Asian initiatives and cultural holiday celebrations ... expecting us to speak for all Asians." When such expectations are not fulfilled, the consequences are "workplace isolation and segregation."*

Sub-Theme 3.3: Bamboo Ceiling

The term 'bamboo ceiling' was coined by Hyun (2005) to describe lived experiences of Asians and the systemic barriers impeding their career advancement. In Hyun's work, she purports the necessity for Asian employees to assimilate into the dominant culture to be recognized as capable and skilled leaders. Essentially, Asian workers are forced to abandon their authentic Asianness, code switch their behaviours at work, and whitewash their identities to achieve acceptance from their white counterparts (Xie, 2022).The bamboo ceiling phenomenon was a common thread throughout theme three based on narratives shared through the surveys and the focus groups.

Numerous examples of internalized racism were shared with us by the participants "where minorities minimize, devalue, and denigrate their heritage to assimilate and fit in so that they can avoid or lessen judgement from the dominant group" (Hwang, 2021, p. 598). Internalized racism leads to a damaged sense of self, while perpetuating the vicious cycle of oppression. A number of participants in our study felt pressure to conform to whiteness and colonial ideologies due to a deep desire to feel accepted and receive potential consideration for leadership positions. This was illustrated by several educators who expressed similar notions of feeling pressurized to conform, *"I resonate strongly with internalized racism/white-washed identity. … I also believed that performing whiteness helped people take me more seriously."* Another teacher described the conflict they experienced when they were advised to speak up and not be so quiet, *"My grandparents and parents were taught to keep our heads down and be agreeable to survive this world. So when a white department head says to someone with my background 'the squeaky wheel gets the oil' [it] sets me up for conflict."* The teacher goes on to explain that they changed their personality to gain approval by the department head. This teacher's experience demonstrates a common dilemma that Asian employees often find themselves in. This is consistent with research conducted by Lu et al. (2020) who found that workers held strong opinions about Asians, especially East Asians, seeing them as quiet, non-confrontational, and should not be outspoken or assertive. As a result, Asians find themselves in compromised career predicaments. On one hand, they need to showcase white dominant leadership norms by being outspoken and assertive, however, by doing so they risk being viewed as overly aggressive. Hence, it is critical that organizations value diverse leadership styles that honour culturally relevant practices.

Undeniably, the bamboo ceiling is a reality for many Asian employees of YRDSB due to the widely-held stereotype that Asian people are quiet and do not challenge authority. Hence Asians are perceived as good workers, but not skilled to be leaders. As one educator explained it, *"There is little effort on the board's part to encourage a different narrative [other] than the obedient worker who will not cause waves… System imposed 'Model minority'-ship is clearly alive and well."* and *"Asian voice has been silenced where Asians are expected to and tend to conform."* This is particularly evident for Asian women, who are expected to be quiet, polite, and compliant (Liang et al., 2018). Here is an example of an Asian female teacher who defied the submissive stereotype by confronting administration with her concerns:

> ***Parents have disregarded my expertise as a female Asian educator … I had threatening notes written to me, to which concerns were dismissed, because I was 'making too big a deal of it' and a white administrator had determined that there was no risk.***

The fact that this teacher was made to feel that she was overreacting to the issue at hand, speaks to the notion that her behaviour did not fit within the stereotypical perceptions of Asian female docility. Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018) give evidence that implicit bias against Asian women in the workplace is a barrier to career advancement due to discriminatory experiences such as discrediting their experiences of hate, not being viewed as a leader, feeling invisible, and assuming they would be submissive and passive.

Furthermore, in regards to senior positions, we found a number of school employees expressing concerns about the lack of diverse Asian representation. This is explained by a teacher, *"I rarely look to see WHO is in senior positions. … I might come across an Asian sounding name. Maybe they are doing the hard work but they aren't the stars that get their names on the memos and videos."* The bamboo ceiling is a systemic obstacle that Asian workers persistently face due to deeply embedded racial assumptions (Xie, 2022). Relatedly, Lu et al., (2020) emphasize that "individuals are less likely to attain leadership positions when their characteristics fail to match the cultural prototype of a leader, even if they are motivated to become leaders" (p. 4591). Unless the bamboo ceiling is recognized by YRDSB and actionable steps are put in place to embrace diverse leadership styles, Asians will continue to be disadvantaged. This sentiment is noted by an educator:

Real change will only occur when there are Asians (and all other groups) fully represented in leadership roles to speak out from a genuine understanding of our experiences, perspectives and interests. I believe we need representation that reflects, at the very least, our student population.

The bamboo ceiling is heavily documented in the scholarship across various industries (Hwang, 2021; Lu et al., 2020; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018) and our study further corroborates this literature. Essentially, Asian employees are pressured to whitewash their identities to match the dominant norms of an assertive leader, but for female Asians who defy the demur stereotype, outcomes can be more detrimental for career advancement. In the end, climbing the leadership ladder proves to be challenging for Asians to navigate, which might explain the low number of senior level Asian employees at YRDSB.

Sub-Theme 3.4: Inequitable Hiring, Promotion, and Advancement Practices

Our data analysis also shows that there were issues with the selection process for vice-principal and principal promotions. One primary concern centred on who had decision making powers about the selection process. The YRDSB (2023b) website states that the principal selection process involves a committee of members with "diverse social identities, perspectives, experiences and expertise" (para. 3). However, participants in our study noted that going through the promotions process required in-depth evaluations by a majority of white administrators and senior leaders, *"In a panel system of hiring, it should be fair. However when there is an all-Caucasian panel, YRDSB can't ensure there aren't systemic biases at play … If the panel was diverse, it would have been more fair."* and *"I believe that the individuals who hire will hire people who reflect themselves."*

One educator shared the response they got from their white principal when they expressed interest in moving forward with the promotions process, *"my principal reacted with 'Are you sure you're ready? Maybe rethink your decision.'"* The lack of support was explicit for this educator, despite almost a decade of experience as a school leader and involvement in school and district-wide projects. Other educators explained whitewashed identities held an advantage because district leaders gravitated toward them, *"I see that whitewashed Asians get more invitations for leadership opportunities and are part of more circles."*

While others shared their disappointments about administrator promotions, *"When it comes to hiring, white privilege still exists" and "the board has stated that they are committed to equity and inclusivity but actions do not back it up… Almost all promotions are of white people."*

Although the district mandates that all selection committee members complete training on 'Bias-Free Hiring,' this appears to be a performative checklist approach due to the fact that barriers remain for Asian members and other marginalized employees. As one educator put, *"You just need to look at leadership positions in the board and the answer is clear that we are still in a culture of whiteness"* and *"How can you hope to affect change … without changing who is at the top to create actual change. … I am pinpointing a hypocrisy in hiring practices."* Hence, the cycle of colonial dominance is perpetuated when leadership spaces do not authentically represent the diverse make-up of the communities it serves.

Many educators also disclosed that the interview process for vice-principal and principal roles prioritized how well candidates spoke and boasted about their achievements. Some expressed their concerns through such comments on the survey:

- *Interview process [is] all about how well one speaks and one talks about their accomplishments. In different cultures, talking about one's accomplishments is not as common.*
- *Advancement processes are colonized - mainly based on how you speak and respond to interview questions.*
- *When it comes to promotions the leadership they look at is very North American. They value people that can speak but not necessarily do the job.*

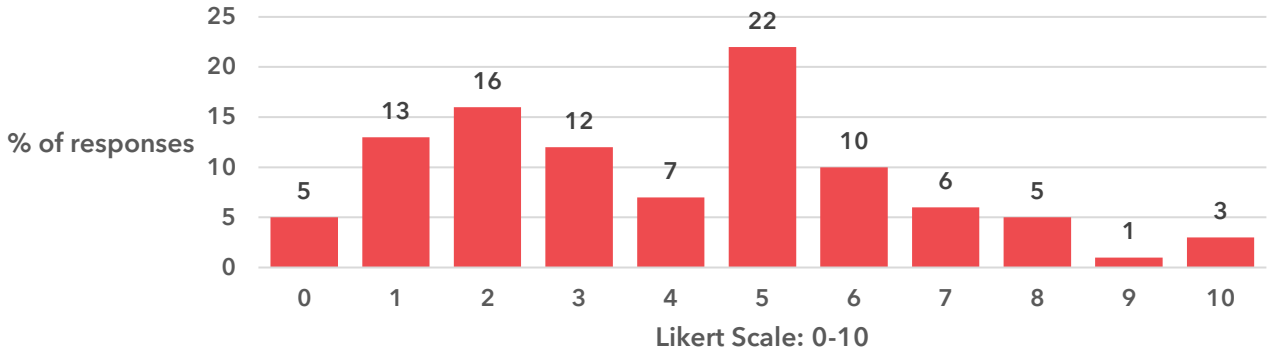
When there is an overemphasis on how one speaks about their professional achievements instead of the impact of leadership in schools and communities, it instantly sets up barriers for those who might speak with an accent, or for those who lead quietly and unpretentiously, highlighting the collective accomplishments of the team and the community, which are common characteristics for many Asian cultures.

As another educator explained, *"I have seen many people that have been overlooked because many East Asian backgrounds are based on being humble and not overly boastful or talkative. This is primarily a North American way of interviewing."*

Many educators disclosed their repeated attempts to get through the promotions process and felt disheartened about failing, knowing they were ready and fully qualified for the promotion. One educator stated. *"I went through the process [several] times, and each time I had white leaders evaluating me. I wish I had more coaching and mentoring."* Other educators recalled the limited feedback or no feedback regarding their interview: *"I wasn't successful the first time. The feedback I got was useless. They told me I needed to be more clear in my examples for some of the questions. Basically, I had to brag about myself more."* and *"Beyond a couple of acquaintances, there has been no support in hiring, advancement, and promotion nor feedback after an unsuccessful interview, despite reaching out on a few occasions to the interviewer for help."* Our results are substantiated by research from Paulhus et al. (2013) who examined why Asian applicants, with similar skills as white candidates, received poorer evaluations in hiring procedures. Paulhus et al. (2013) found that interviewees who self-promoted and self praised scored higher, resulting in biases against Asian applicants because they were less likely to exhibit such behaviours. The YRDSB Leadership Framework identifies that it is designed to "facilitate a shared vision for leadership and what it means to be a leader in YRDSB" (YRDSB, 2020b, para 1). It is important to note that participants did not feel that they were part of the district's vision for leadership, and that YRDSB did not view Asian staff as capable leaders.

As part of the survey data, educators were asked, 'to what extent does hiring, advancement, and promotion processes in YRDSB support the recruitment of people who identify as Asian?' The overall mean was 4.03. This very low ranking substantiates the qualitative responses within the surveys and the stories shared via focus groups. See Figure 12 for more details.

Figure 12. ***Educators' Responses to Advancement and Promotion Supports.***



Note. The x-axis represents a Likert scale from zero to 10, with zero being "not at all" and 10 being "very evident." The y-axis displays the percentage of educators' responses to the question 'to what extent does hiring, advancement, and promotion processes in YRDSB support the recruitment of people who identify as Asian?' The overall average response for educators was 4.03, while the mode was 5.

Lastly, the leadership criterion for principal and vice-principal promotions is based on the district's Leadership Framework for School Administrators (YRDSB, 2020b). This document comprises four domains and eight competencies, many of which centre on equity, diversity, and inclusion. One competency is focused on anti-racism and anti-oppression and references to Indigeneity are prominent throughout the document. However, the document fails to specifically name other forms of racism and oppression such as anti-Asian racism, anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, anti-semitism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, etc. It is imperative that districts use leadership criteria to move beyond performative rhetoric or simply stating buzz words. Instead we need to transform how we think about diverse leadership styles by prioritizing the needs of all equity-deserving groups and how they can be supported through culturally reflective policies and practices.

THEME #3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Equity Audits to Promote Transparency

YRDSB should extend its use of equity audits of its leadership positions (e.g., in-school teacher leader, centrally assigned teachers, vice-principals, school principals, centrally assigned principals, superintendents of families of schools, superintendents with system assignments, coordinating superintendents, associate directors, director), to establish the current baseline of all staff who occupy such positions from an identity-based lens. As part of the DAARS, all current and future baselines should be shared publicly for transparency purposes, yearly goals should be set to increase representation of Asian identities in leadership roles to more closely reflect the diversity of the student population (of whom 49% self-identify as Asian). As part of this process, YRDSB's Leadership Framework (2020b) should be revisited and revised from a perspective that prioritizes EDI. The document should entail leadership criteria that explicitly acknowledges the various forms of systemic racism, including anti-Asian racism. All of these changes can be part of the four-year "Dismantling anti-Asian Racism Strategy" that was previously recommended.

2) Hiring, Promotion, and Advancement Processes and Practices

All hiring, promotion, and advancement processes and practices should be done by panels (at least three members) with at least one member belonging to an equity-deserving group. Criteria for hiring, promotion, and advancement should highly value lived experiences amongst other factors such as number of years teaching, qualities of resilience, and embodiment of heart-felt anti-racism values. Questions asked as part of interviews should promote innovative thinking that challenges normalized educational policies and practices to create more inclusive schools, as opposed to criteria that prioritizes how eloquently interviewees can speak and boast about their achievements. Information on how many people were interviewed, what was their identity, the procedures used for ranking applicants, and making final decisions should be tracked and reported to identify where there is continued discrimination and bias. Further, tracking when and how often racialized candidates are not successful in the promotion process is also necessary as it will shed light on the colonial structures that create barriers for them. YRDSB must consider how to level the playing field for equity-deserving groups, especially those who are not successful in their bid for a position, e.g., application to be a vice-principal or principal. Practices and processes must be implemented for all equity-deserving staff to further develop their leadership skills and competencies, e.g., shadowing, administrative coverage, school and system initiatives. Beyond tracking, reporting should move beyond actions taken by YRDSB, focusing on the impact realized or not realized by Asian students, staff, parents, and community.

3) On-Going Professional Learning

YRDSB should be committed to on-going professional learning opportunities that amplify Asian voices and identities (e.g., workshops, keynotes, equity projects, research studies) created for educators and administrators (in some cases mandatory instead of optional) to continue to invest in their growth. This can be done through the family of schools within specific geographies to pool together resources and create richer opportunities for sharing and collaboration in relation to the local needs of the community. Students, parents, and community involvement should be prioritized as part of creating such learning opportunities.

THEME #4: COLONIAL PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES GIVE RISE TO HARM AND BARRIERS

Colonial practices and procedures continue to prevail in YRDSB leading to harm and barriers against Asian members, as well as all other marginalized groups.

Our research sheds light on colonial practices and procedures that manifest across the district, resulting in harm and barriers against Asian members, as well as all other marginalized groups. Settler colonialism occurred in the 1700s, when Europeans exploited Canada's First Peoples across Turtle Island and aggressively stole their land and resources. Indigenous peoples were denied access to their traditional territories and were displaced to desolate locations by colonial authorities. European colonizers forcefully imposed their cultural values and religion, while denigrating Indigenous ways of knowing and living. Colonial mentality upholds white dominant culture as superior over all others, thereby positioning racialized people in the margins. Theme four of this study highlights how colonialism manifests in ways that lead to cultural shame and feelings of inferiority for Asian members and other marginalized groups. The following subthemes delve into some key findings about colonial practices and procedures that act as barriers against Asian members of YRDSB.

Sub-Theme 4.1: Learned Helplessness

YRDSB's protocol for addressing incidents of hate and/or discrimination focus on step-by-step guidelines for staff when dealing with acts of hate. The district also has procedures on responding to discriminatory slurs and statements for employees across YRDSB. These protocols delineate directives that are grounded in the Ontario Human Rights Code with the ultimate goal of "eliminating all forms of hate, racism and/or discrimination to create safe, inclusive, and equitable environments that support student achievement and well-being" (YRDSB, 2023c, para. 2). These protocols are positive steps towards achieving equitable spaces. However, when such guidelines are not followed, then acts of hate and discrimination continue to permeate across the district. Our survey data revealed a significant number of issues with ineffective reporting procedures that stem from colonial mindsets, thus resulting in continued harm and pain inflicted on Asian members. We found several participants reached a state of 'learned helplessness' as the result of ineffective reporting procedures or lack of timely interventions. Learned helplessness occurs when people feel powerless, largely due to having limited or no control over outcomes, leading to a loss of motivation to act on issues. For numerous participants, they did not feel safe or motivated to report racist incidents for various reasons. For example, a teacher did not feel safe to report due to power differentials and feeling vulnerable in the presence of their principal:

[They - principal] called me into the office to tell me that they were disappointed that I didn't speak up at the staff meeting to share my input on the matter of Ramadan. … I was shocked that they assumed I was Muslim, due to my brown skin - my mind was racing, and I was lost for words. Once I regained composure, I calmly told them that I am not Muslim and cannot speak on behalf of Muslims. They immediately realized their mistake and dismissed me from their office. I never reported it. I was in a vulnerable position.

For others who did report to their leaders, the situation remained unchanged, or they were worse off than prior to reporting. Below, we highlight examples of participants' narratives of learned helplessness as victims of anti-Asian racism.

Subsection 4.1a: It's Just a Joke

Throughout the student survey data, references to "joking" and "laughing" were used 63 times mainly to describe the context of microaggressions. The majority of students did not bother to report racist sentiments, because they were told *"it's just a joke"* or *"just laugh it off"* and *"laugh and move on."* This invalidated feelings of hurt and inferiority. One student described the reactions to a racist meme that depicted East Asians being punished for COVID-19. *"What's scary is that I saw a lot of people in the comments section agreeing with the meme. People will say 'it's just a joke' but in the end, it's not."*

Another student discussed how acts of hate are always disguised as a joke, and never get reported, *"It was never reported, it was always seen as a joke and the people around would always apologize half-heartedly right after. … Overtime, as these small acts accumulate it starts to affect opinions and mental health."*

Subsection 4.1b: Accent Discrimination

Accent discrimination was disclosed by numerous participants making them feel inferior to white Canadians. When Asian accents are mocked under the pretence of a joke or *"all in good fun,"* it undermines the real harm experienced by Asians who speak with accents or who have close relatives with accents, as noted by a student:

It's honestly pretty common to mock [Asian] accents. It really makes me frustrated but it is the way it is. …It never gets handled to be honest, the teachers never find out and if you try to snitch the person says 'It was a joke.'

Accent discrimination is grounded in colonial mindsets that value and uphold mainstream Canadian English as superior. One student stated, "*most kids get annoyed at my slightly unusual [Asian] accent and ignore me after a sentence or two. It makes me feel like an outsider."* There is a significant body of research on prejudice against Asian accents across North America (Bauman, 2013; Bhatia, 2018; Kim et al., 2011). For example, Bauman's study (2013) found Asian accents were rated significantly lower in comparison to mainstream American English accents and European accents, across three dimensions: attractiveness, dynamism, and intelligence. Without question, Asian participants who were exposed to the mocking and imitating of Asian accents felt shame, embarrassment, and stigmatized yet these incidents go unreported and unresolved because they are masked as jokes.

Subsection 4.1c: Reporting Led to No Results or Made it Worse

A number of participants shared that when they had the courage to report incidents of anti-Asian racism to their superior, they experienced inadequate or very poor outcomes. Many disclosed that they were made to feel invalidated and were questioned about their judgement in relation to whether the incident was truly worth reporting. This is explained by an educator who expressed, *"So being told, are you sure? Even if you report an instance of racism, it's like, Are you sure? Is that what you meant? Do you think that's what they meant? You know, maybe they [perpetrator] were going through something."* Another educator pleaded, *"First, BELIEVE us when we report incidents of racism."* This speaks to the dismissive responses when incidents are reported. Participants openly shared experiences of micro-invalidations when leaders downplayed the seriousness of the racist incident, resulting in victims' learned helplessness. An educator described why they do not bother to report incidents anymore, *"the response is 'I'm sorry you had to go through that' or 'I've never seen that occur' there is little true acknowledgement that the issues are actually real."* Another educator stated, *"The reporting process and what's to follow is just too much to handle. … even if we report it, it won't be taken seriously, or it's just a process that will land us in a lot of trouble and the outcome would be no different than if we didn't report."*

Other examples of ineffective reporting were based on follow up actions that caused even more trauma. One educator recalled a racist incident in their school where a parent verbally attacked them with an anti-Asian slur in front of students and other staff members. When this anti-Asian racism incident was reported to the superintendent, they were told to handle the situation on their own without any support:

> ***The advice from my white superintendent was… to call that parent and have a meeting with them. So there was absolutely no support for me as a victim... I was very harmed by that racial epithet in front of students and staff. But I was actually more harmed by the [senior leader's] response.***

As previously noted, the misnaming of Asian people and confusing Asians for other Asian members were common experiences among numerous participants. One educator noted that they were misnamed for other Asian workers, as if they were interchangeable. This misnaming happened for years and they described what happened when it was reported to their principal:

When I brought this up [mixing up Asian staff members' names] to our administrator, it was a very difficult conversation. I said this does not make me feel welcome in the work that I'm supposed to be doing here at this school. It was seen as venting. And that was it. Principal said, 'oh that's terrible, I'm sorry you went through that.' And that was it. And when it was brought up again, it was – okay, that's enough venting for today, let's move on.

In this case, reporting was seen as an opportunity to vent and no follow up was conducted to rectify the chronic misnaming of Asian staff members as an act of microaggression. Ineffective reporting procedures as well as a lack of timely or constructive intervention in YRDSB has contributed to many Asians feeling a sense of learned helplessness and no longer bothering to report incidents since the outcome rarely led to desired results.

Sub-Theme 4.2: Centering Dominant Ideologies and Cultural Practices

Throughout our data analysis, we learned how participants navigated through protocols that perpetuated structural and cultural inequalities. Essentially, some district-wide processes centred dominant ideologies that did not align with Asian cultures or customs.

Subsection 4.2a: Days of Significance for Asian Employees

One example of centering dominant ideologies is based on procedures to request significant days off. Numerous employees shared that they had to submit proof that they practised their declared faith:

- *"...it requires staff members to complete an extra step to prove it is a religious holiday."*
- *"...having to request a faith day has been an upsetting process. I have to prove my faith in order to observe it."*
- *"significant faith days are not recognized and barriers are set up to deter us from taking them."*

Employees explained that the process involved giving proof of their membership to a religious organization. As one educator explained, *"When requesting a Buddhist faith day, I was asked by Human Resources to provide a written statement from my faith leader that I regularly attend services with the congregation."* However, unlike Western mainstream religions, where attendance at worship is the norm, in the Buddhist faith, it is *not* essential to regularly attend a temple. Hence, this makes the faith day request challenging for those who are Buddhists and are not members of a temple. A staff member explained that their religion does not operate the same way as Western mainstream religions:

One example is the process of requesting significant faith days. I remembered the first time I requested it I was asked to 'show a letter of approval from your religious leader'. This totally demonstrated the board has no idea how our religion works as we do not have a religious leader like a priest.

Another form of colonial mindset that centres dominant ideologies revolves around Lunar New Year, which was notably problematic due to the district's strict definition. YRDSB designates Lunar New Year as a Buddhist faith day. However, the majority of Asian staff observe Lunar New Year as a meaningful holiday in a cultural sense, and they are not Buddhist. Lunar New Year is celebrated by East Asian and South East Asian people across the globe. In fact, this holiday involves rituals that derive from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, in which specific customs and practices are dependent on individual family traditions. A number of educators stated their dismay when they were not permitted to take the day off.

I was denied Lunar New Year off because the Board defines it as a religious holiday while for many who celebrate, do so culturally. The Faith Day request form denies the fact that people of Christian beliefs would also participate and practise Lunar New Year celebrations and would therefore ask us to lie about our faith in order to be able to observe the Diamond Day. [Diamond Days refer to YRDSB Significant Faith Days]

Similarly, another educator expressed their frustration with how the district views Lunar New Year based on colonial mindsets of religion. They noted that significant days should not be restricted to faith based criteria only. They expressed, "*Fix the messed up process with faith day requests - some holidays are cultural and still VERY important.*"

Subsection 4.2b: Name-Based and Accent Discrimination in Hiring, Advancement, and Promotions

Within the focus groups, some educators expanded on the problematic nature of the application process for teaching positions. Teachers described that their Asian sounding name was a barrier due to "*unconscious bias against names that are not North Americanized.*" Sadly, name-based discrimination is all too common when organizations operate from colonized structures. Extensive research conducted by Oreopoulos and Dechief (2012) found that resumes with Western names were 35% more likely to receive an interview compared with resumes that had Indian or Chinese names, despite similar skills and qualifications among all the resumes distributed. Oreopoulos and Dechief suggest that "employers often treat a name as a signal that an applicant may lack critical language or social skills for the job" (p. 2). Hence, deficit assumptions against Asian names are real obstacles to employment pathways.

Educators recalled numerous occasions where their Asian accents prevented them from advancing their careers. As one educator stated, *"I have been questioned about my first language which is not English by a principal who refused to hire me."* And another teacher went on about how their "*fluency and spoken language ability [were] questioned.*" Many educators also discussed that they witnessed accent

discrimination. *"I see others getting discriminated against because of their accent. It was never handled or reported because no one really cared."* One teacher described how a fellow lead teacher was never promoted because their principal did not support their promotion despite outstanding leadership qualities. *"The principal during those years was not supportive of their promotion - partially because they were too good at supporting the administrative work around the school and partially because English was not their first language."* These examples of discriminatory practices against Asian educators substantiate the quantitative survey results previously mentioned in Figure 11, in that the average rate was very low at 4.03, in response to whether Asian identities were supported in hiring, advancement, and promotions.

THEME #4 RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Policy and Procedure Review

As part of its four-year cyclical review of policies and procedures, YRDSB should commit to a deep and public annual review of three to five of its policies most closely aligned with EDI. The reviews should occur each school year with public consultations with students and parents from equity-deserving groups to continue its growth in creating more diverse, equitable, and inclusive schools. The policy reviews should include public consultations with students and parents from equity-deserving groups to continue its growth in creating more diverse, equitable, and inclusive schools. This includes a re-examination of human resource procedures that designate specific Asian holidays as faith based, and protocols on submitting proof of one's declared faith. It is highly suggested that the reviews begin with policies that have not been changed or amended the longest. This will ensure that policy revisions align with the current needs of schools and communities from an EDI perspective.

2) Community and Healing Spaces

There is a lack of community and healing spaces for Asian members where they can authentically share their lived experiences with others and connect for support and mobilization to challenge inequitable policies and practices in schools. As each area of schools has its own unique needs, it is suggested that such groups can be formed in-person or online, and be coordinated within each family of schools. Budget and resource allocation is required to support the anti-racism work such groups would conduct to make schools in YRDSB more inclusive. These spaces will also promote self-care and relationship building amongst various stakeholders.

3) On-Going Consultations

There has to be great investments in research projects and community consultations to regularly get feedback from various stakeholders in YRDSB to identify current gaps and innovative solutions. For example, ensuring culturally reflective services should be a key priority of the board at all levels and within all schools. Consulting Asian affinity groups within the board is a great starting point to capture their concerns and how they can be involved as part of new changes implemented and how Asian identities can be amplified in classrooms and the larger community (e.g., recognize and celebrate Asian excellence and Asian leaders).

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Through a Critical Race Theory framework, this research study aimed to amplify and legitimize the lived realities of Asian educators, students, staff, and community members across YRDSB. With over 1,300 respondents who participated in surveys and focus group discussions, we actively listened to heart-felt personal narratives and carefully examined survey responses. During our focus group discussions, participants shared their vulnerable stories of being perpetually othered, chronically confused for other Asians, dismissed for leadership opportunities, treated as a stereotype, readily mocked and ignored, just to name a few examples. Many participants expressed strong emotions including anger, frustration, and crying when sharing their traumatic experiences. Invisibility was a common thread felt by participants. In fact several respondents acknowledged that this study was the first time their identities and struggles were ever acknowledged in YRDSB. The focus group findings triangulated the large number of survey responses, confirming that Asian members face barriers and discrimination due to colonial mindsets that are deeply entrenched in district structures and practices, e.g., hiring, promotion, and advancement practices, access to days of significance. A major dimension that compounded the stress and anxiety felt by Asian participants was the surge in xenophobic acts during the height of the pandemic, namely because Asians were scapegoated for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The four major themes that emerged from the data included:

Theme #1: Need for Asian Representation in the Curriculum

There is a need for Asian representation in the curriculum that empowers students and educators, and more systemic efforts must be made to dismantle anti-Asian racism in classrooms, schools, and across the district.

Theme #2: Low Sense of Belonging

Although students and educators generally felt welcomed at school, there is a low sense of belonging by Asian members in YRDSB.

Theme #3: Lack of Asian Staff Representation

Diverse Asian representations are lacking among staff at all levels, and most notably in senior leadership positions.

Theme #4: Colonial Practices and Procedures Give Rise to Harm and Barriers

Colonial practices and procedures continue to prevail in YRDSB leading to harm and barriers against Asian members, as well as all other marginalized groups.

A series of recommendations are outlined for each theme as a call to action to lead to short- and long-term improvements in YRDSB. The recommendations were made with the objective of mitigating critical issues pertaining to colonialism which have manifested into cultural and ethnic shame, internalized racism, whitewashed identities, and feelings of inferiority for Asian members.

We truly believe that education is key to dismantling racism and fighting against oppression. Murray Sinclair who served as Chief Commissioner of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and former member of the Canadian Senate once said, "Education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it" (National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education, n.d., para. 1). We remain hopeful that this report propels YRDSB leaders to take actionable next steps so that schools and workplaces become safer spaces for Asian members and all marginalized groups. This requires stakeholders working together to decolonize district protocols, procedures, and practices. The YRDSB senior leadership team and the Board of Trustees should carefully review this report in its entirety and embody the work necessary to address and mitigate the root causes of anti-Asian racism that permeates through the organization. This is the start of a journey to name systemic anti-Asian racism in YRDSB, acknowledge the complicity of the board in not addressing it, and most importantly a commitment to action for improvements.

GLOSSARY

Anti-Asian racism is defined by ideologies, beliefs, prejudice, and/or discrimination against a person or specific group of people who identify racially as Asian or who are perceived as Asian. As with all forms of hate and oppression, anti-Asian racism occurs and is perpetuated within systems and their normalized ideologies, policies, and practices which continue to be exclusionary in subtle ways.

Colonial logic and/or colonial mentality upholds white dominant culture as superior over all others, thereby positioning racialized people and other marginalized groups as inferior.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that centres the lived experiences of racialized people as counter-narratives to the dominant discourse. CRT upholds the notion that race is a social construct with goals to dismantle racism.

Diversity refers to representation in terms of difference (e.g., race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, language, etc.) that should resemble the identity of the people and the community the institution serves. Diverse identities within a team offer valuable perspectives, experiences, and representation.

Equity refers to justice and fairness, and takes into account that not all groups have the same power and privilege. Within institutions such as education, equity refers to practices, processes, and policies that ensure and promote a fair access to opportunities and outcomes for diverse identities within an institution (e.g., hiring, promotion, mitigating microaggressions, data collection, access to opportunities, etc.). Those who start off with less deserve to have barriers removed and their voices amplified.

Inclusion refers to someone's sense of belonging through means of feeling valued, validated, and accepted for their authentic identity. For institutions, it is rooted in creating a sustained welcoming and protected environment for all people that prioritizes diversity and equity as foundations for working spaces where people feel valued and respected for their identity and contributions.

Microaggressions are indirect and subtle forms of discrimination against members of marginalized groups. Such acts include unintentional incidents of invalidation, exclusion, and otherizing. For example, asking Asian people "where are you really from?" implies that they are a foreigner and do not belong to Canada.

Systemic racism is defined by racism that is part of the structures, policies, and procedures of an organization that serve as barriers for minoritized groups. These are often deeply entrenched practices and beliefs that perpetuate discrimination against racialized identities. For example, resumes with Asian names are 35% less likely to get interviews compared to Western names, despite having the same qualifications (Oreopoulos & Dechief, 2012).

whiteness/white supremacy refers to the construction of white identity and its normalized ideologies as the dominant standard. This translates to unearned privilege and power for white identities or for those who conform to such ideologies. As a result, white identities experience less barriers in terms of access to opportunities.

AFFINITY GROUPS AND TEACHING RESOURCES

YRDSB affinity groups

- ESSAH – Educators for Students of South Asian Heritage
- ETSS – Educators for Tamil Student Success
- SEAS – Supporting East Asian Students
- NEKS – Network of Educators for Korean Students

Online Resources to Support Educators to Amplify Asian identities and Cultures

Many of the resources are from: **Addressing anti-Asian racism - Canada.ca**:

- Faces of Racism
- Asian Canadian Educators Network (ACENet)
- Act2endracism
- Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educators – Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
- Anti-Asian Racism Resources – Human Resources Student Association, Ryerson University
- Here's How You Can Support the Asian Community Right Now
- Elimin8hate
- Anti-Asian Racism Is Surging in Canada. Here's How to Help Fight It
- Anti-Racism Resources - University of British Columbia
- Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression - University of Victoria
- Resources guide: responding to anti-Asian racism – Asian Institute, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto
- Fight COVID-19 racism
- Groupe d'Entraide Contre le Racisme Envers les Asiatiques au Québec (in French only)
- Anti-Asian racism – Winnipeg Public Library
- Anti-Racism Toolkit (PDF format) – Canadian Federation of Students
- This is what anti-Asian racism looks like in Canada
- Fight anti-Asian racism – Cultivating Growth & Solidarity, A Mental Health Hub for Asian Communities in Canada
- Timeline: This is Canada's history of anti-Asian racism that COVID-19 has amplified
- Comité antiraciste et inclusif de l'École de travail social de l'UdeM (CAÉTSUM) - École de travail social - Université de Montréal (umontreal.ca) (in French only)
- Service à la famille chinoise du Grand Montréal (in French only)

- Asian Arts and Culture Trust
- Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice - Building Resilience – (in English and French)
- Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice - Fight Racism in Canada! - Video Series
- Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice - Fight Racism in Canada! - Infographics (available in English, French, Simplified &Traditional Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese)

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