

Administrators' Black Caucus Position Paper - Ontario College of Teachers Standards of Practice

Introduction:

The Administrators' Black Caucus seeks systemic and structural changes that create policy language, new accountability measures and indeed new mindsets that will finally affirm the humanity and immense value of all Black staff, stakeholders and most importantly, Black students. Using Critical Race Theory as a tool for analysis we understand that an update and modernization of language and legislation in the Education Act is necessary in order to dismantle individual and systemic anti-Black racism in PPM 144, PPM 145, the Standards of Practice and the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession. The revisions need to ensure greater alignment with PPM 119 and Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan. The continued success of this work is reliant upon courageous leadership with clear end goals that are time sensitive.

The Issue:

In 1994, The Royal Commission of Learning recommended that teachers in Ontario are given the ability to regulate their own profession in order to allow for greater autonomy, self-governance and transparency in the best interest of the public. On July 5 1996, the government proclaimed the Ontario College of Teachers Act with 4 clear mandates: licensing, professional standards, discipline and accrediting. In 1999, The Standards of Practice became part of the by-laws and the guiding framework for the Teaching profession in the province of Ontario. This ability to self-govern and self-regulate like other professional groups holds teachers in high esteem in relation to other highly regulated professional bodies.

The Standards of Practice outline the principles, knowledge, skills and values that each educator should effectively demonstrate when working with students. It is well intentioned; yet, it lacks the necessary accountability and monitoring that is required to ensure its effective implementation. In addition to this, it lacks a critical lens and framework to be responsive to the diverse needs across the province.

It is clear that a dichotomy exists between The Standards of Practice and the success of racialized and marginalized students across Ontario. This is likely directly linked to the lack of understanding and grounding in the principles of equity, inclusion, anti-oppression and anti-Black racism that have become necessary competencies for all education professionals in an ever evolving and diverse society. As the education sector begins to grapple with the reality of anti-Black racism and its impact on generations of Black students, it is time to engage in structural transformational change by interrogating and dismantling these dated and oppressive guidelines.

The demographics have shifted across the province and the expectations that hold educators accountable for meeting the needs of all students remains stagnant and unjust for addressing the needs of racialized students. The historical context of colonialism continues to be the systemic structures that oppress Black students and the lack of responsiveness to adapt the Standards in order to ensure its serving the interests of all stakeholders while maintaining public trust and confidence is highly problematic and further perpetuates harm. There must be a sincere and honest recognition and acknowledgement that racism, specifically anti-Black racism exists in our daily lives which extends into all our spaces. We have to be bold, reflective and critical in order to disrupt, dismantle and challenge the policies, practices and systemic barriers that have served to oppress Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

Systemic Barriers:

1. Systemic and oppressive structures built upon white hierarchical leadership which have been centered in the power and privilege of colonial thinking.
 2. Lack of diverse representation at the decision making table when the standards become part of the by-laws.
 3. The Standards of Practice have remained a static document that is not responsive to student needs. Since its development in 1994, it has not been revised, refined or adapted based on demographic changes and needs.
 4. Over-emphasis and value is placed in Eurocentric knowledge and rooted in white valued terms, such as “uphold” and “common”. It lacks language about diversity, cultural competence and how our differences honour our individuality and personal narratives.
 5. Failure to evolve with changing demographics and increased demands for accountability.
 6. Teacher efficacy is strongly correlated to student achievement. The lack of explicit teaching, learning and unlearning about critical race theory and anti-oppressive structures has served to continue to marginalize Black and other racialized groups.
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Recommendations:

1. Create specific language centered in Critical Race Theory. It is necessary for all stakeholders to understand intersectionality and the hypervisibility of Blackness and how this informs their teaching practices.
2. Develop a clear link to the TPA process through an anti-oppressive lens to hold educators accountable through clear structures, expectations and monitoring to ensure they have a deep pedagogical understanding and actions that will lead to the creation of transformative anti-oppressive spaces that support the success of all students.
3. Develop a clear policy and discipline process that aligns with the Ontario College of Teachers Act for holding teachers accountable for actions that further perpetuate and harm Black and other racialized and/or marginalized students.

4. Use language that extends beyond terms centered in the dominant culture steeped in whiteness. It is essential that cultural competence that speaks to the diversity of student populations is woven into the language used when creating the Standards for all educators.
 5. Disaggregate data across the province to clearly identify how Black and other racialized students learning needs are not being met in order to support teachers in creating spaces that support and sustain anti-racist work in order to change the outcomes for all students.
 6. It is essential that every teacher across the province shifts from the stance of being a reflective educator to a critical practitioner where they demonstrate a clear learning stance, understanding and critical lens about how to serve, support and teach diverse students, specifically Black students and other racialized and/or marginalized groups.
 7. The Standards of Practice should be a working document that is reviewed and revised at least every 5 years based on the shifting and diverse needs across the province.
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Works Cited:

For the Love of Learning, Royal Commission on Learning, December 1994
