



Anti-Black Racism and Black Excellence Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Durham Catholic District School Board – North and South Board rooms at CEC

January 29, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

Attendance:

ABR & BE Advisory Committee Members: N. Emanuel (Chair), T. Razac Huggins, K. Gaines, A. Rodney, A. Voisin, S. Williams, L. Awoleye

Board Staff: G. Winn, K. Akomolafe, K. Stevenson, P. Sorhaitz, Y. Fisher-Brown, M. Prabu

Online Attendees: J. Oritse, N. Cyrus, J. Onyejiaka, J. Augustine, Antoinette, Mimi, CR, S. Wigley, Duane, T. Boland, Geraldine

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Members were informed that the session was being recorded for note-taking accuracy.

2. Opening Prayers and Courtesies

N. Emanuel said the opening prayer, followed by A. Voisin offering the Land Acknowledgement and A. Rodney the Ancestral Acknowledgement.

3. Welcome

K. Akomolafe welcomed the committee members to the meeting.

4. Adoption of Minutes

“THAT the Anti-Black Racism and Black Excellence Advisory Committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on January 29, 2026.”

Motion moved by S. Williams and seconded by A. Rodney. Carried.

5. Feedback on Equity Invitational Learning series

Agreed to discuss at the February meeting.

6. Black History Month at DCDSB

Agreed to discuss at the February meeting.

7. Culturally Relevant Mental Health Supports for Black Students

P. Sorhaitz and Y. Fisher-Brown shared a presentation on Identity-Affirming Mental Health at DCDSB, which addressed:

Framework Overview

The Board outlined its use of School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) guidelines, with a focus on dismantling oppression through cultural humility and identity-affirming practices.

Black Student Mental Health Needs

The Board acknowledged that Black students experience mental health challenges shaped by systemic racism, lived experience, and cultural barriers.

Members reviewed insights gathered through student consultations, Black Mental Health Day, and school visits.

The introduction of microaggressions-focused videos and teaching modules was highlighted as a key instructional support.

School-Based Supports

Current supports include:

- Social Work Access Line
- Culturally responsive clinical practices
- SEL programming (Harmony)
- Partnerships with community-based mental health agencies

Staff Development and Equity Integration

Student Services staff participate in equity-focused case studies, scenario-based learning, and equity-integrated professional learning.

All mental health clinicians receive ongoing training related to anti-Black racism, identity-affirming practice, and culturally responsive assessment.

Community partnerships include the Women's Multicultural Resource & Counselling Centre.

Classroom and Educator Capacity

Committee members raised concerns regarding how staff training translates into consistent classroom practice. The Board highlighted:

- Tier 1 mental health supports
- System-wide professional development sessions
- Monthly mental health podcasts
- Integration of belonging and welcoming practices into school improvement planning

Key Discussion Topics

Accountability and Monitoring

Members emphasized the need for stronger mechanisms to ensure training is applied consistently across classrooms. The Board acknowledged this gap and the need to strengthen monitoring of systemic impact.

Disaggregated data collection is underway through school climate surveys and longitudinal studies.

Prevention and Response

The Committee requested enhanced preventative approaches and clearer accountability expectations for educators. The Board recognized this as a pressing need and identified areas for improvement.

Representation

Concerns were raised regarding low Black educator representation. The Board reported that:

- Workforce census data exists, with disaggregated analysis ongoing
- Recruitment is impacted by a province-wide teacher shortage and a limited pool of Black graduates from teacher education programs
- Targeted outreach efforts are underway, including career fairs, partnerships, and focused recruitment strategies

SEL Program Implementation

The Harmony SEL program begins in Grade 5, consistent with evidence-based parameters. Younger students receive support through:

- Child and Youth Counsellors (CYCs)
- Classroom co-teaching
- Self-regulation programming
- Individualized supports, as required

8. Updates from the ABR & BE Dreams Delayed Report Review Subcommittee

N. Emanuel shared the subcommittee's review of the OHRC's Dreams Delayed Report.

In summary:

Purpose of the Subcommittee:

- Analyze Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) *Dreams Delayed* report.
- Compare OHRC expectations with DCDSB current practices.
- Identify strengths, gaps, and priority recommendations.

Strengths Identified by the Subcommittee:

- Clear stated board commitment to addressing anti-Black racism -Black racism
- Formal policies and procedures for responding to racism
- Regular training for staff

- Multiple reporting options for students/families
- Existing, Black-centered supports (e.g., BSUs, counsellors)
- Race-based data collection underway
- Intent to establish an internal Dreams Delayed working group

Gaps Identified by the Subcommittee

- No ABR-specific tracking.
- No dedicated systemwide leader with anti-Black racism expertise.
- Lack of monitoring of classroom level implementation.
- Limited transparency to families.

Recommendations from the Subcommittee

- Implement ABR-specific incident tracking.
- Create a dedicated Anti-Black Racism Strategy.
- Update Terms of Reference for monitoring & reporting.
- Strengthen and resource Black staff and family affinity groups.

Next Steps:

- Subcommittee report to be circulated to Executive before next meeting.
- Steering Committee begins in February to address OHRC action items.
- Vote on recommendations scheduled for next meeting.

9. Business Arising

10. Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by N. Emanuel and seconded by K. Gaines. Carried.

11. Closing prayer

Meeting Adjourned at 9:03 p.m.