

GREATER ESSEX COUNTY
District School Board

The Black Student Voices Matter (BSVM) Project



2020

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The Black Student Voices Matter (BSVM) project

was part of the GECDSB's Anti-Black Racism Strategy. The aim of the project was to elicit the authentic voices of Black students attending secondary school within the GECDSB. The information gathered would be used to establish a youth participatory action research strategy, an approach proven to have a significantly positive effect on the academic and the future prospects of Black students (Livingstone et al, 2014). This project aimed to provide an empowering leadership opportunity for Black youth to have their voices heard and to give them the opportunity to have a positive impact on their school experiences. Student voice as an instrument of student engagement, a method for developing feelings of connectedness and belonging in school has been reported in academic literature (OECD, 2013, Fielding, 2001, Apple & Bean, 1995, Baroutsis, 2015). However, the real benefit of student voice is gained from the collaboration and active participation of students in making decisions and solving the identified problems alongside adults (Fielding, 2001).

Timeline

The project was initiated at the beginning of the summer of 2020 to continue to establish a connection between self-identified supporting Black GECDSB Staff with Black youth during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period issues relating to Anti-Black Racism were brought to the forefront due to Police killings in America. In turn, this highlighted issues experienced by the African Diaspora in other countries, including Canada.

Background

The idea of race in Canada is a contentious one (Daniel, 2019, Taylor, 2020 and Clark, 2018). Unfortunately the data for Black students within Canada is reflective of that of America with research in the area of Black student achievement continuing to highlight the disparities in the academic success of Black students in comparison to the general population of students (Ibarguen, 2020, Braithwaite, 2010). In addition, the social context of Black youth has been described as the school to prison pipeline (Swain & Noblit, 2011) with an over-representation of Black males incarcerated in Canada despite having a lower representation in society (Bernard, 2016).

It is suggested that this trajectory has been caused in part by school socialization patterns and disciplinary actions Black students encounter during their education (Bernard 2018).

Data History

A majority of the data on Black youth in Ontario is extrapolated from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) as prior to 2017; it was the only school board that collected racialized data. Since 2017, the Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism mandated that all school boards would be required to collect racialized data for its students by 2023. In 2016, the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board followed suit to conduct student surveys which included racialized data.

Trends

There have been some improvements noted regarding the attainment of high school diplomas and the reduction of high school dropout rates of Black students according to racialized data collection through the TDSB, which showed a 34% increase in the graduation rates of Black students between 1992 and 2016 (Ibarguen, 2020). However, it is clear Black students are still over-represented in the applied level in comparison to their White classmates, 39% and 16% respectively (James et al, 2017). This has resulted in a substantially lower percentage of Black students pursuing post-secondary education in comparison to other racialized groups and White students, 25%, 60% and 47% respectively (James et al, 2017, Turcotte, 2020). The impact of this trend perpetuates the cycle of poverty experienced by Black families and can be witnessed via the higher proportions of Black youth experiencing unemployment and not in employment, education or training (NEET) after graduating high school. 20% of Black male youth in comparison to 12% of other young men were in the NEET category (Turcotte, 2020). According to the 2016 Census report, Black Canadians were more likely to have lower income status and more likely to be un- and underemployed. In addition, the data revealed that there was a decline in academic and post-secondary success of subsequent generations of Black students, which potentially continues the cycle of poverty experienced within Black communities (Statistics Canada, 2016).

These trends highlight the continued obstacles that Black youth face not only in their current lives as students, but also the impact it has on their futures as contributing Canadian citizens. This leads to the need for the dismantling of the systemic barriers which Black students continue to face. Systemic racism has been described by Braithwaite (2010, p310) as:

“When racism is so entrenched in an institution that established policies, procedures and practices result in accepting racial discriminatory policies and practices as the norm... In some instances the policies are so camouflaged and concealed and the practices are so entrenched that it is recognized as acceptable norms.”

Literature on Black student attainment highlights the need for more Black teachers, in particular, Black male teachers, mentorship, higher expectations, parental involvement and racially and culturally inclusive curricula aimed at all students not only Black ones (Jameel, 2013, Braithwaite 2010, Tecele, 2016 and Smith, 2020). Due to the complexity and insidious nature of systemic racism, its obliteration requires a multifaceted approach. This includes the education of not only Black students about their history and cultures but all students within schools because, “the logic is simple. Racism is a learned behavior, so the earlier you are exposed to an anti-racism message the less likely you are to grow up to be a bigot” (Sherwood, 1993). There are of course many stakeholders involved in this process, but the most adversely affected are the Black students whose voices need to be heard and their solutions to the problems considered and implemented (Braithwaite, 2010, Scott et al., 2013, Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). Research that involves students provide deeper understandings and higher quality of findings, especially research aiming to address nuanced and sensitive issues because “youth possess a more intimate knowledge of the adolescent world than the adults in their lives” (Livingstone et al., 2014).

Methodology

The original project implementation was to use a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach to gather and analyze the data, develop and implement the solutions and report the findings to ensure that the Black students were the instruments of change and leadership. This approach would have provided Black students “a platform on which to express their own thoughts about critical social issues, contribute their unique insights as adolescents, and propose solutions that will be best suited to addressing the issues that concern them” (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). However, due to the disruption to life that COVID-19 created during the summer holidays, the recruitment of student participants during the summer months was extremely difficult, as many were either working, in summer school or they and/or their parents/guardians were apprehensive in committing to an on-going summer research project, which had originally been designed as twice weekly sessions over 9 weeks.

The original study methodology was adapted into a preliminary study in the form of a qualitative questionnaire conducted in individual student interviews. The themes generated would then be used as the basis for a more detailed research project utilizing a YPAR approach. The preliminary study aimed at recruiting 30 students who would participate in an hour individual interview. The final student number was 12 students.

Student Commission Partnership (SCC)

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings a collaboration was formed with the Student Commission Partnership (SCC). The SCC Partnership is a not-for-profit organization which facilitates other organizations in developing and maintaining programs that make an impact in the lives of the youth that they serve. In order to complete this mandate, they developed the Sharing the Stories (StS) Platform, which consists of a variety of components, one of which is a database of survey questions. This collaboration provided access to the StS database of quantitative and qualitative research questions which were used in the study. The StS platform is approved by the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board and is based on the Ownership, Control, Access and Possessions (OCAP) principles of First Nations Information Governance Centre. The original proposal had included the partnership with the Windsor Black Educator's Alliance (WBEA). Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 and leadership changes, the WBEA was unable to participate.

GECD SB Black Staff Equity Alliance (BSEA)

Fortunately, this led to the creation of the GECD SB Black Staff Equity Alliance (BSEA). The BSEA is a joint Union/Board partnership group formed from the voluntary coalition of Black GECD SB Employees and their allies whose objectives is the support and advancement of Black employees and students within the GECD SB.



Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using individual student interviews. Students were interviewed using virtual and in-person (socially distanced) sessions. The interviews were to be conducted within an hour, however, the sessions lasted between an hour and a half to two and a half hours in length. Student participants were from 5 high schools within the GECDSB. The schools the students attended were representative of the GECDSB with regards to locations; rural and urban. The student grades ranged from grade 8 transitions to recently graduated. There were 8 students who self-identified as female, and 4 students who self-identified as male. The areas of focus were identified by the researchers and informed through a literature review. The areas of focus were:

- **Identity**
- **School Belonging**
- **School Safety**
- **Healthy Relationships**
- **Health and Well-being**
- **Future Prospects**

Students were required to self-register via the GECDSB's Office 365 platform prior to the start of the project. Once registered, the self-identified Black staff contacted the students individually to set up a session. Students were given the choice between in-person or virtual sessions.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was conducted using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens which is based on the view that “racism is ordinary and pervasive” and because of this, racism and race are “endemic and permanent in our society” (Bowman et al, 2009). Due to the power hierarchies founded on the basis of skin colour, positions of privilege have been created and those in power are not willing to acknowledge, accept or challenge the status quo, suggesting that certain behaviours and systems are “typical” (Rocco & Gallagher, 2004). Analysis of the responses were examined using a CRT approach and recurrent themes present in the student experiences were elucidated.

Findings

The findings presented utilize the categories and constructs (bolded titles) of the qualitative research questions from the StS database which encompassed the areas of focus identified by the researchers. The overarching threads of commonality generated through the analysis of student responses are provided. Direct quotes from the participants are interspersed through the findings in order to fully include the voices of



the students. A small sampling of the questions used and some of the responses are included in Appendix A. Due to the nature of the questions, the responses that could identify the student or the school that they attended were deliberately not included in the Appendix for privacy reasons. All participants were assured of confidentiality if not anonymity.

Access to Safe Spaces and Feeling Safe

Most students felt safe, however, some reported feelings of not being supported by staff when dealing with issues about racism and bullying. Some students did not feel as though they fit in or were able to find the right group or niche. There were reports regarding the disparity between how racism was addressed in elementary school in comparison to high school; with high school appearing more responsive than elementary school.

Students reported that they felt schools' responses to racial comments or inappropriate behaviours were tokenistic in nature. For example, touching of a Black students' hair which was addressed with a "talking to" or possible detention, but no in-depth discussions as to why the action was inappropriate and the Black student being centred-out for their "aggressive response to the situation".

Students commented that they felt their White teachers and friends were "uncomfortable talking about race" and they purposefully did not brooch the subject because of this awareness.

"I don't think that it's a topic that most people are comfortable talking about it. Yes, it would be nice to chat and talk about race, but normally it's only when something happens. I'm not comfortable talking about race to my white friends. I'm not usually the one bringing it up."

Students felt that as elementary school students, they and their parents needed more support. Some asked "Why didn't we have these supports and positions (referring to CYF, FNMI and Grad Coach) in elementary?"

"I felt the [support staff] at my elementary school was racist because she wouldn't let me stay inside but allowed another student to stay inside. The white girl didn't go out, but I had to go outside. I told my mum; she didn't say anything, and she said yes probably she is. It made me feel really sad. Even the same white girl [who had remained] told everyone that the [support staff] was really racist because she was allowed to stay in and not me."

Rural Students

Students who lived in rural areas described feeling that they were always being “looked and stared at” or watched to see what they were doing in public places.

Relationships

Healthy Close Relationships utilizing the constructs of relationship connectedness and skills and school connectedness:

Most students felt that they had supports and were able to make friends. Most mentioned their families and friends as their main support systems. Most students were able to name at least one staff member that they were comfortable going to for help.

“I wish I knew about the FNMI worker or CYF.”

Coping with Prejudice

Students were aware of overt racial behaviours around them, in particular the use of the *n* word. They reported a distinction of racism based on if a racial slur was used directly at them or another as an intentional insult. However, they all expressed that they did not like the use of the term, but they felt it was an uphill battle.

The racial comments came in the form of “black jokes”, being centred out with stares or stereotypes about Black people. Students reported being “exhausted” with continually having to educate their peers and address the behaviours in a respectful manner, some felt uncomfortable speaking up against comments. Some of the students did not feel they had noticed any prejudices, however, believed that they would be able to if it did or had occurred.

In general, students developed a means of coping with prejudice by having specific friend groups whilst avoiding others and adopting a nonchalant attitude and an 'acceptance' of the systemic structures. The students were fine mixing with people from other places. And all described having good friendships.

“this is how things are, but I've got to get on with things anyway.”
“It gets exhausting.”

Teachers

Students suggested that teachers should be able to speak to students individually. Teachers should be amicable, fun and staff and the student body should be educated on cultural diversity. All the students felt that Black History should be taught and acknowledged all year long.

“... in history regarding slavery and the 1960s during Grade 10 history. Same old same old, the basic information on what went on in the civil rights movement...”



The students felt that teachers needed to connect with them in a personal way and be open about themselves. They also articulated that teachers should connect with them outside of the classroom. Other suggestions included group workshops to discuss about race and racism, for all students not just Black ones.

Mental Wellness

Mental Wellness related to the construct of life satisfaction:

Students assessed their life satisfaction from a scale of 0 (worst life) to 10 (best possible life) at their current situations. Response ranged between 5 and 9.5. The lower scores corresponded to the lack of social interactions students experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They also noted family issues and stresses regarding the uncertainty for the future planning as stressors.

Cultural Connectedness

Cultural connectedness as it relates to identity:

A few of the students had spent time researching information regarding North American Black History. Students of mixed parentage described feeling alienated from White and Black Communities and described their understandings of their identities often through the lenses of their parent's identities and interactions with the World. Parent's with a strong sense of Black identity correlated with the student having a strong sense of their identities. They were able to articulate the interplay of generational burdens of Blackness and their ability to still feel pride in being Black. Most of the students reported feeling separate from their Black cultures or community in their daily lives often due to the familial circumstances of the individual student.

Students reported that involvement in sports teams and other extra curricular activities both in Canada and across the border helped with their understanding of their identity and a sense of self.

Black Identity

Multidimensional inventory of Black Identity which related to centrality, private regard, school regard, and assimilation to White culture:

The students felt close to other Black people due to the familial connections. If these were not present students expressed a lack of belonging to their Black Heritage.

“I'm proud to be Black because it's who I am.”

“We're able to see through how people actually are. People can't hide behind their prejudices and stuff...”

“Because we are so strong.”

“Variety of culture, food, languages, histories it is diverse and beautiful in its own way.”

“We have come so far, beautiful connection. “

“It makes me unique in my community and different from other people.”



Teacher Attitudes

Students judged the attitudes of teachers on an individual basis. They were able to discern that some teachers might have racial views that they would not be privy. They felt that teachers who were more actively involved in the school communities would have a more positive regard to people of other races and Black people's contributions to society. All the students involved expressed feelings that they would like more representation of Black culture, artwork and books within the school building not just as an add on but woven into the fabric of their environment and experiences. Students did not believe that they needed to act in a different way around White people. They all strongly believed that it was more important for a person to be themselves than conform to preconceived expectations.

Assessment of Needs and Future Prospects

The students expressed that the best way to combat racism is through education, an open-mindedness and most importantly dialogue and communication. Students described the use of assemblies and small group sessions in which all students within the school can communicate. Most of the students felt that there should be more Black teachers and support staff in their schools.

Lines of Support

All the students expressed that their first line of support was a parent or parents. This was due to feelings of trust and shared experiences of racism. They felt that their parents gave them the best advice for dealing with issues of racism. Some students reported that they had at least one adult at school that they could talk to about racism, however, they would like to go to a CYF or Graduation Coach if they had access to those programs.

Students hoped that people would stop judging them and others based on the colour of their skin and that their experiences would be validated. If they said incidents of racism happened, believe them. Most students did not feel they had the appropriate supports to help them dealing with racism. Students that had a Black teacher, CYF or Graduation Coach reported that they used these resources. Students that learnt about these options, expressed that they wished they could have such supports.

Students explained that teachers/staff need to understand how difficult this type of conversation would be for them to have. They felt it would require that it could be done in a private and comfortable environment and that even though the staff member may not have lived experiences of racism, that it still affects the student, mentally and emotionally. They expressed that teachers should not take it personally and to be able to address racism and not “gloss over” the issue.

Dreams

Students reported strong dreams regarding their future prospects after high school such as continuing to College or University to become professionals in fields such as health care (pharmacy, psychology and nursing), business owners.

“That the situation shouldn't be taken lightly.”

“I really wish there were more sports in our schools and early interventions, and we should be taught it in elementary just like bullying. And teach students and staff why it is not okay to say the n word or to treat people differently just because of the colour of their skin.”

“There is a very “get over it” type of mentality.”

“Justice means something and we need to be protected and acknowledged.”

“Teachers and school staff need to listen and learn from our stories and our pain and then educate themselves directly involved in issues related to Anti-Black Racism.”

Recommendations:



The following recommendations are based on the findings of this report and the current research collected to date on the issues of Anti-Black Racism.

Rationale for the recommendation is also included.

- 1** A more in-depth study consisting of a larger number of Black student participants from the elementary and secondary school levels. The study should include both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data should utilize a YPAR

Rationale: The identification of the number of Black students within the School Board will allow for a more robust assessment of needs and allocation of resources.

- 2** Provision of more resources for Black students in the form of self-identified Black staff members such as teachers, Change Your Future Counsellors and Graduation Coaches in elementary schools.

Rationale: Early interventions set the foundation for success.

- 3** Integration of relevant and up to date cultural and historical educational resources within teaching and the school environment.

Rationale: All students need to be exposed to Black culture and history to break down stereotypes and build an inclusive school community and thus Black students and staff would not be burdened with the role.

- 4** Mandatory continuous Anti-Black Racism workshops for all staff within schools and the School Board.

Rationale: Inclusive and safe school environments are created by all staff, not only teachers.

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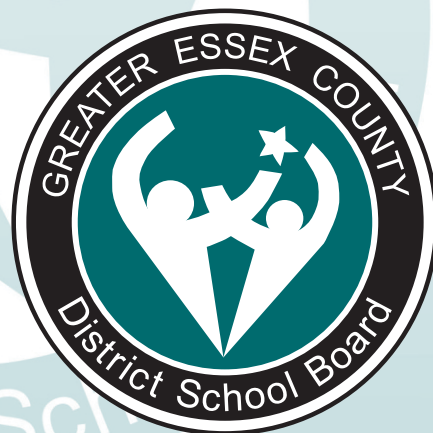
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Appendix A – Questions and Student Responses

1 Access to safe spaces and Feeling Safe

- I feel safe when I'm at school.
- School makes me feel welcome.
- Bullying and aggression are not tolerated.
- All people at school treat me with respect.

"(School name), no, I didn't like it! (School Name) was nice and I liked it."

"A bit. I usually went quiet. There was drama about school."

"I feel safe for the most part because there are students that understand me, especially other students of colour, so I feel supported. I feel that the staff were supportive, sometimes, they should handle issues regarding bullying and aggression a lot differently. People are given a pass or a detention or suspension but they never really deal with the issues at hand and then it continues to happen over and over i.e. racial slurs and micro aggressions about her skin colour, appearance, hair, clothes etc."

"I felt safe, welcomed, and respected but I did not feel like I fit in very well there. I could not find a group to vibe with. The school is very clique, and there is nothing wrong with that, it just that I did not feel like I belonged, besides a few relationships with peers and staff. My friend group is at another school. Bullying and aggression were not tolerated at all. Zero tolerance and handled swiftly."

"Yes, teachers some students not all. Some students treat me with respect some don't. When don't feel treated with respect, e.g. ignoring you, got suspended 2-3 days (other student got suspended for same amount of time) twice because students called me the 'n' word and got into a fight. First time you were here."

"Yes, but sometimes people at my school use the 'n' word who are white and I want to fight them. But I don't want to fight them. They don't say it to me, but I hear them. Since I came to Canada, I didn't know what racism was in [country of birth] I didn't even know what racism was, when I came here I had to be educated on it, my mum had to educate me on it. Anyone who isn't black shouldn't be saying n word to you. White people back in the days in slavery. History grade 5 learnt about slavery. I found out about anti-black racism when I see it on tik-toks."

2 Healthy Close Relationships

2.1 Relationship Connectedness and skills

- How well do you get along with other people and make friends?
- Do you have help or support from people when you need it?
- How aware are you of prejudices being expressed around you?
- How comfortable are you interacting with people who have different values and ideas than yourself?
- Do you get along with people your own age?
- How well do you feel connection to your friends and peers?

“Pretty well, have to put on a new 'act' as school clown vibe.”

“I am aware of prejudices being expressed around me, sometimes it's directed at me and sometimes other. I try my best to speak up, but it gets to be exhausting.”

“I don't notice a lot at school because I have my own group. The judgey people stick with their own circle and don't try to know what other people are all about. Only the druggies who use the n word and show up to class stoned. Honestly, as long as they're not using it directly at somebody in order to offend that person, it doesn't really get me upset, even though it shouldn't be used.”*

2.2 School Connectedness

- I feel close to people at my school.
- I feel am a part of my school.
- I am happy to be at school.
- The teachers at school treat students fairly.
- I feel safe in my school.

“I am at a wonderful school. I feel like I am part of my school, I get along with most people easily, I am happy to be there. The students are treated fairly. They hear us out, and they listen to students' voices. There is a place and a space for everyone, and if there isn't a space, we create one.”

“Today I was thinking that maybe we could have had a group where everyone comes together about things we need, things that are happening.”

“No, I'd like to be at an all-Black or mostly Black. I don't even know why my mum moved here... I think I'd have more friends. I wouldn't feel lonely. More people to hang with. Students have asked, can I touch your hair? I let them touch my hair, but I worry that if they play with it because it [my extension] might fall out. The teachers at school treat students fairly. One of my extension twists fell out and one of the kids walked, around asking whose extension it was luckily I took it out so no one would know it's me.”

What are your recommendations for developing a school environment that builds a sense of belonging?

“Build and make authentic relationships with all individuals, especially people that are different than you.”

“I think it is very important for each student to be connected to a safe support in the building, and that there should be more recent pictures within the buildings and on the walls, especially reflecting the diverse students within the building.”

Give us your tips, ideas and advice for adult allies on how they can improve their interactions with young people. (This advice could be for adults who are involved with youth events/activities/programs, or who interact with young people during their everyday life).

“I feel like adult allies should make sure that they do the work, education is key, they need to build relationships with students and youth of all ethnic backgrounds (racialized, non racialized), people that are different than them. Know the history of the people and the

students you teach and make sure it is celebrated. Also, Allies should have the courage to shut down people who are ignorant on any level, and educate them and others on why their ignorant actions or words were not okay. i.e. The N-Word, Micro aggressions etc.”

3 Mental Wellness

3.1 Life satisfaction

Where do you stand at the moment? If 10 is the best possible life at the moment and 0 is the worst.

“7, Hmmm there are things that I would have to do ... I have my classes planned out for college. Friendships have kinda drifted and not doing as much as usually [due to COVID].”

“I would say I am at a 5. I have extreme anxiety, but I am currently dealing with it. It is much better than it has been. It used to keep me home from school.”

“4 because I have a lot of stress and baggage with familial issues, but I am happy and I like my life. I wish my family could get better. I have had worse times, and I know that there is a process and things take time.”

“I would say 9, because life can always be better, and there is always work to do, but things are pretty good.”

4 Cultural Connectedness

4.1 Identity

- I have spent time trying to find out more about being Black, such as its history, traditions and customs.
- I have a strong sense of belonging to my Black community.

“No, I choose not be part of the politics and all that. I know the basics.... about slavery, treated differently half the time, some people are uncomfortable with [Black people]. I've seen it on the internet.”

“I have spent time trying to find out more about being Black, such as its history, traditions and customs. Yes, my family has the underground railroad museum in Amherstburg and forced to visit that every couple of years. Talk about my history at home and all my uncles and aunts keep track of the family history so always stories from that.”

“No, I haven't really, but interested in it.”

“I have a strong sense of belonging to my Black community. Yes, I have a strong sense of community. I feel accepted. There isn't really many [Black] people, a few people here or there. I don't think there's very much.”

“So much, I am proud to be Black, I would not want to be any other race.”

How do you build your identity (i.e., What gives you a sense of who you are)?



“My everyday perspective on life in general and common sense. Your average no problematic person.”

“My family. They've helped me a lot and helping me through life. My family have a strong sense of who they are.”

“I see myself as beautiful, good and happy. Comfortable. If I'm serious I can achieve anything.”

“My family taking and learning from their mistakes and lessons, my (Black) culture, and my friendships.”

“My family, sports and different extracurricular groups that I am involved in. I meet different people from different places (all nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions), I get to travel, make friends, volunteer, and be part of a team. It makes me happy. My family keeps me grounded. They help me make sense of this crazy world.”

5 Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

5.1 Centrality

- I feel close to other black people
- I have a strong sense of belonging to other black people
- If I were to describe myself to someone one of the first things that I would say is that I'm Black.

“I identify as Black, but I do not just see myself as Black, I am so much more than that, to others I am just a Black girl, but I have many identities which help make me who I am.”

“It would depend where I am e.g. online if it's somewhere I need to yes, but in person I don't think I have to state the obvious...”

“Yes, [I'd say I'm Black] especially because I don't people think I'm Black because I don't have the colour. They seem surprised. Honestly, I can understand sometimes. They expect you to look Black. Mostly white people.”

5.2 Private regard

- I am happy that I am Black (because)
- I am proud to be Black (because)
- I feel good about Black people (because)

“I am happy that I am Black (because) all the food, cultures, dances and cultural dances. People in general are really pretty.”

“I am happy that I am Black (because) Yes, I feel as a Black person I can be more creative in the sense of style and beauty.”

“I am proud to be Black (because) I find that there are lots of interesting facts about being black and you get to know how people actually are... people can't hide behind their prejudices and stuff...”

“I am proud to be Black (because) It's who I am so why wouldn't I be proud.”

“I feel good about Black people (because) they are nice and understanding. They're like they'd always be kind to me even if I was white. They just have spirit.”



"I am proud to be Black because we have come so far and we have a beautiful culture and strong connection."

"I am happy to be Black because it makes me unique and different from many other people in my community."

5.3 School Regard

- I feel that most teachers feel that Black students are as smart as other students of other races.
- I feel that most teachers think that Black people are as good as people from other races.
- I feel that teachers think that Blacks have made important contributions to society.
- I feel that schools should have Black books and artwork in the building.

"I would say its 50/50 you may have teachers that judge you, because of who you are... I have had teachers pick on me for no reason... they'd always push me last nerve in class and I'd get upset upset or I'd complete my work and they'd always pick on me and what I've written and question why I was writing information down ahead of people."

"No, I do not feel like most teachers feel that way. I feel like some do and some do not. It depends. You see it in how they interact with the students. I think that society in general has treated us Black people as if we are not as smart and as deserving and other people follow suit. It is sad. I definitely feel that is it so important that we have Black books and artwork in the building so students at least have many different perspectives and lived realities."

5.4 Assimilation

- It is important that Black people go to White schools so that they can learn how to act around White people.
- I think it is important for Blacks not to act Black around White people - Blacks should act more like Whites to be successful in society.

"Because society only portrays Black girls as ghetto and raggedy. In [country of birth] you're judged In your behavior not on the colour of your skin. Or if you're dark, dark, dark..."

"Disagree. It's quite foolish." [referring to white schools]

"Be yourself."

"In a way yes, depending on the area that you're in I think that you have to act proper in certain areas so you're not depicted as trash and you have to act proper in certain areas so it doesn't harm you. Not really having broken English. You have to sound like you're going for a job interview. Because most people around the world wouldn't see a Black person would strive in the future. And sometimes I feel that a Black person has to work 10 times harder just to get around." [Referring to successful in society]

"No way, not at all! We need to continue to be exactly who we are!"

"Have good balance in general. If you're with homeys fine... you can act hood... or you can act Black... know time and place to be hood or not. There's always a time and place to do stuff."

“But more history because we don't do anything... if we had to choose a topic for history there was nothing included. But Black history somewhere. [Teacher's name] really tried to do that. We need more people to bring attention to it... not just the one Black teacher.”

6 Needs Assessment

How long have you been at your school and what types of extra-curricular things have you been involved in?

How do you define or understand Anti-Black Racism?

“Anti-Black Racism are all the racist actions, policies and institutions that exists to keep Black people from being treated fairly or equal, it keeps us way down.”

“Anti-Black Racism is racist, stereotypical, and discriminatory acts that are directed at Black people to keep them from thriving.”

What improves racism? What makes you feel good?

“People need to be more educated about it. I don't why you should be judged by the colour of your skin.”
“Racism towards Black.”

“Maybe we could in school group that once in while have assemblies, start online groups to spread word through the internet to understand racism and get help.”

“People coming together as one and taking time to communicate with other people around the World rather than judging them on how they talk, what they look like or judging them on how they live.”

What negatively impacts racism? What makes you feel down and takes energy from you?

“The normalization of having Black Men being killed and shot and the spectacle that is made of Black death.”

“Slavery, micro aggressions, white supremacy police brutality, carding, stereotypes, racial slurs. These all negatively influences racism.”

“Ignorance, hatred, fear, power, and control.”

When you need supports regarding racism or are looking for help, who do you go to or where do you go?

a. Why do you go to them?

b. What change are you hoping for?

“Go to my parents first... if that wasn't an option, I'd go to someone like you... or search up online to get some help.”



“Honestly I'd just hope that people will start understanding more. As long as there's some change is happening that we're improving then we're all good.”

“I feel in the future there better be some common sense between human beings. I feel like the newer generation maybe looked down upon but I think the younger generation has made some positive changes and I hope that racism will be at an all-time low when we're older.”

Are there any supports at school that you have used to help with racism or experience the changes that you wanted? Why or how? What made these supports work for you?

What hasn't worked? Why didn't it work?

What types of things do you wish existed in times that you needed support?

What is the one thing you think teachers (and school staff) should know/remember when working with students experiencing Racism - And why is this the one thing that's so important?

“I'd go to my Principal, if I was out and about, I'd call 911 depending if they want to fight me. If at school I'd talk to the teacher.”

“I've never experienced racism at high school. The 'n' word wasn't towards me.”

“No, I just go by what my family tells me. I don't think that it's a topic that most people are comfortable talk about it. Yes, it would be nice to chat to talk about race, other than when something actually happens. Not comfortable talking about race with my white friends. I'm usually not the one bringing it up. [A friend's] Mum will talk about and have other people's thought. In a good manner not in a negative way.”

“I think they should know that they will be probably hard for them to explain that's happening in their situation and it should be done in private and somewhere they feel comfortable.”

7 Supplementary Qualitative Questions

Please describe your current or future academic goals?

How has school (teachers etc.) supported you to achieve these academic goals, if at all? Please give examples

Please describe a caring, supportive adult in your life. Please share an example that demonstrates this.

Black Student Voices Matter 2020

GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

“I would like to go to University.” “Pharmacy or Pharmacology”

“No I don't really go to Guidance that often, I kind of figured out my own path on how to get there. I looked up the courses in University and the prerequisites for Pharmacy.”

“My parents, my Grandparents and my Aunt (Dad's sister). Because they love me.”

“To college and play soccer and ... visiting some places, have a wife and kids. Have successful business.”

“Want to do nursing, if not nursing, firefighter or police.”

“They called me to the Office and let me know which classes I need to do to get the goal.”

