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Private:

Report No.: 13-06-1415
Date: June 19, 2013

HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD
Response to Reality Check June 2013

PURPOSE: To update the Governing Board on the Halifax Regional School Board's (HRSB) progress on the response to Dr. Enid Lee's *Reality Check* report (2009).

BACKGROUND: Staff reviewed "Expanding from Equity Supports to Leadership and Results" and the Minister of Education's Response to *Reality Check* in order to address the recommendations specific to the Halifax Regional School Board.

CONTENT: Significant steps have been taken to respond to the 2009 *Reality Check* report. This has included both a focused effort to increase the number of students responding to the self-identification survey and professional development for staff focused on the needs of the African Nova Scotian learner.

The response to Dr. Enid Lee's *Reality Check* report and the Minister's response are framed around the areas of governance, staffing, accountability, professional development, curriculum and student and community engagement. Staff will continue to use this information to plan the work they will do and to monitor the success of African Nova Scotia students.

COST: N/A

FUNDING: N/A

TIMELINES: See Appendix A

APPENDICES: Appendix A: Halifax Regional School Board's 2013 Response to Dr. Enid Lee's *Reality Check* (2009)

RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Governing Board receive this report for information.

COMMUNICATIONS:

AUDIENCE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
Deputy Minister	Superintendent	
Director, African Canadian Services	Director, Program	
HRSB Principals	Director, School Administration	
Black Educators' Association	Superintendent	
Public	HRSB Communications	Following Board decision

From: Tracey Jones-Grant, Coordinator Diversity Management,

To: Senior Staff - June 3, 2013
Halifax Regional School Board - June 19, 2013

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Staff of the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) reviewed “Expanding from Equity Supports to Leadership and Results” and the Minister of Education’s Response to *Reality Check*. Senior Staff have contributed to this update on the *Reality Check* report.

Halifax Regional School Board continues to focus on improving efforts to enhance the achievements and educational experience of African Nova Scotian students. Efforts are centered in the belief that ongoing professional development, board initiatives, and the provision of culturally specific resources will enable the board to continue to realize overall educational improvement for these students.

GOVERNANCE

- **Recommendation #34**

Principals and Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Right Coordinators review structures and processes for addressing issues of institutional racism and place more focus on dealing with the racism faced by African Nova Scotia students.

HRSB Staff Response:

Staff continues to follow the Hiring Best Practices model which was initiated in 2008-2009. All school administrators received training on this as part of a two day session with the Best Practice Guidelines (May 2010).

In 2011, HRSB through the RCH (Race, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights) Advisor produced a video called *Student Voice: Our Classroom Too*. This video includes interviews with youth on issues related to race, culture and human rights. This video is used as part of RCH, diversity and cultural proficiency training.

Professional development on the RCH in Learning Policy was held for every teacher and principal grades P-12. This professional development was completed during bus cluster days over the last three years.

- **Recommendation #35**

Principals allocate adequate institutional time for the preparation of Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Right teacher representatives for their responsibilities in regard to race, culture and human rights.

HRSB Staff Response:

Every school currently has a voluntary Race Relations Cross-Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH)/Sexual Harassment Liaison. Each school ensures that time is made available to these staff to fulfill their voluntary role. Annually, training is provided for new volunteers on their roles and how to implement the HRSB Harassment Policy. The board also provides resource materials to school-based RCH/Sexual Harassment Volunteer Liaisons specific to their needs in this role.

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In 2012 -13, through a grant from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, advanced training was provided to those experienced liaisons volunteers.

The Leadership Development Program (a program for aspiring school administrators) includes an RCH component on identifying and addressing school and employee incidents and on providing inclusive instructional strategies that can be utilized by the RCH and Sexual Harassment Liaisons when providing support to students in their schools.

● Recommendation #36

Principals provide, wherever feasible, both private space and scheduled time for Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Right Coordinators to address needs and/or challenges specific to African Nova Scotian students.

HRSB Staff Response:

Principals make arrangements in scheduling and for the provision of a private space to facilitate these meetings.

STAFFING

● Recommendation #4

School boards increase the number of African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers (SSW) where appropriate, in consultation with the Race Relations, Cross-Cultural Understanding and Human Rights Coordinator, and that SSWs be integrated into the life of schools to enable them to directly impact the educational experience of the African Nova Scotian learner.

HRSB Staff Response:

Prior to 2003 - 04 there were three Student Support Workers (SSW) who provided support to at-risk students. In 2003 - 04, targeted funding was provided by the Department of Education to hire African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers. By 2004 - 05 there were eight African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers and in 2012 - 13 there are fourteen.

Student Support Workers are members of CUPE and their contract indicates that SSWs are to be part of the program planning team for students who they support. We continue to integrate SSW into school teams.

● Recommendation #5

School boards elevate the position of Coordinator of Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights, or its equivalent, to enable co-coordinators to influence more directly the implementation of Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Right policy and procedures at school sites.

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HRSB Staff Response:

HRSB has a number of employees who directly influence the implementation of the RCH Policy and procedures:

- The RCH Program Advisor is responsible for attending provincial meetings and overseeing the implementation of the HRSB's RCH in Learning Policy and the Racial Equity Policy.
- The Facilitator-African Nova Scotian, Aboriginal And Mi'kmaq Student Support provides professional development to all Student Support Workers.
- The Coordinator-Diversity Management is a member of the senior staff team and has direct influence in the development and implementation of policies, procedures and professional development. The Coordinator also attends provincial meetings in relation to RCH and Diversity.

• **Recommendation #25**

School boards intensify efforts to recruit more AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN teachers.

HRSB Staff Response:

The HRSB agrees that all parties (School boards, universities, Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and the Black Educators Association) have a role in intensifying efforts to recruit more African Nova Scotia teachers. The HRSB currently has a provision in the collective agreement that allows African Nova Scotian teachers and other equity candidates to obtain a 100% term contract much sooner than the vast majority of teachers.

At the regular board meeting of June 20, 2012, Chair Irvine Carvery made the following motion:

That the Board direct staff of the Halifax Regional School Board to fully implement Article 10.18 of the NSTU Collective Agreement in regards to the hiring of and using the Employment Equity clause which is contained within the Collective Agreement until such time as the number of Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian teachers are reflective of their numbers in Nova Scotia.

It was moved and seconded (Arsenault/Poole) that the Board direct staff of the HRSB to fully implement Article 10.18 of the NSTU Collective Agreement with particular emphasis on hiring Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotia teachers until such time as the number of Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotia teachers are reflective of their numbers in Nova Scotia. If, however, there are no full-year term positions available in the upcoming school year, rather than using Article 10.18, staff will give preference to qualified and competent Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian teachers for other term positions in a manner consistent with the NSTU Collective Agreement. As well, because it is important to find effective ways of increasing the number of qualified minority applicants, the board will invite senior representatives of the following organizations or agencies to join representatives of HRSB in a task force the terms of reference of which will be to seek ways to increase the proportion of members of the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities who qualify for teaching positions with the Halifax Regional School Board taking into account the experience of other professional groups. Those invited to join the task force should include

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representatives of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Mount St. Vincent University, Dalhousie Faculty of Law, as well as the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities.
(CARRIED)

The above motion resulted in the hiring of 9 African Nova Scotians in the fall of 2012.

The Halifax Regional School Board and the Black Educators Association worked together on an African Nova Scotian teacher self-identification project. From this, 83 individuals self-identified as being of African Nova Scotian descent.

- **Recommendation #30**

School boards negotiate with unions where necessary to align the salaries of Student Support Workers (SSW) with their responsibilities. Research tends to support that SSW salaries should be adjusted upward.

HRSB Staff Response:

Student support workers are members of CUPE.

While the Minister has accepted recommendation #30, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has asked for more time to study the matter to compare responsibilities, qualifications and wages of the Student Support Workers across the Province. The HRSB will await direction from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Recommendation #1**

The Department of Education (DOE) facilitate school boards in collecting quantitative data on the academic performance of, and opportunities to learn, that are provided to African Nova Scotian students.

HRSB Staff Response:

HRSB conducted a self-identification campaign. Data collected will be used to look at the academic performance and opportunities to learn for African Nova Scotian students.

The Halifax Regional School Board will comply with the direction from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on the collection of data related to African Nova Scotian students.

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- **Recommendation #2**

School boards and the DOE review the individual Program Plan of every African Nova Scotian student and make changes in placement where deemed necessary.

HRSB Staff Response:

Schools review the Individual Programming Plans (IPPs) for all IPP students twice annually to determine if the student should continue on the IPP or to identify what changes need to be made to support this student. Current data from the self-identification survey will allow for a closer look at the number of African Nova Scotian youth on IPP and the reasons why the student is on the IPP.

Student self-identification data has improved with 67% of students responding to the self-identification survey. HRSB will review and analyze any data produced by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as per the Department's response.

- **Recommendation #33**

Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Right coordinators begin to gather race-specific data regarding African Nova Scotian students in terms of the input they receive from the programs developed to serve their special needs or from programs directed to all students.

HRSB Staff Response:

Between August 2010 and January 2013 self-identification was a standing agenda item for Administrators and Supervisors during their regular meetings.

A board-wide self-identification campaign was conducted between August 2012 and January 2013:

- Brainstorming and sharing of ideas on how best to educate school communities regarding the benefits of self-identification (including key messages to share with school communities).
- RCH Program Advisor/Student Support Facilitator/Diversity Coordinator consulted on promotions and key messages for the campaign.
- All schools participated in a board-wide initiative that invited all elementary and junior high parents and high school students to consider self-identification.
- Following the campaign – a review of results and the sharing of successful strategies to promote self-identification occurred.
- Next steps – Administrators will look at how their schools will continue to encourage the self-identification of all students.

Using self-identification data, 14 schools have received Department of Education and Early Childhood Development funding to support the African Nova Scotian Math/Literacy project.

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The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development response indicates that the Department will work with boards to “ensure they are receiving input from all programs to address the needs of the African Nova Scotian Learner”. HRSB will use this information once it becomes available.

- **Recommendation #38**

Teachers engage in action-based research so that they become more focused on the impact of their instruction.

HRSB Staff Response:

HRSB does not mandate teachers to do action – based research. The Halifax Regional School Board employs a process called Continuous School Improvement where teachers, individually and collectively, reflect on their practices using data with the goal of improving achievement for all students.

Article 60 of the NSTU collective agreement allows for educators to request leave for study purposes – one of the priorities of this study leave is related to diversity related courses.

HRSB will await guidance/support from Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on developing the capacity within teacher populations to engage in action-based research as per the Department's response.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Recommendation #21**

Best practices be shared and that new initiatives in professional development take into account the development of the capacity of teachers to address racism and feelings of isolation of lone ANS students.

HRSB Staff Response:

See Recommendation #40

- **Recommendation #22**

Guidance counselors be included in appropriate professional development training programs along with teachers being prepared to teach English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies courses.

HRSB Staff Response:

In February 2012 the African Canadian Services Division hosted profession development for teachers of African Canadian Studies 11 and English Language Arts 12: African Heritage and Guidance Counselors.

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Eight Halifax Regional School Board guidance counselors participated in this professional development session.

- **Recommendation #32**

The Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Right Division in each board continue to provide professional development for SSWs to equip them to respond to their wide range of responsibilities.

HRSB Staff Response:

The Facilitator of Student Support provides regular/annual professional development for Student Support Workers (SSWs).

During the 2012 -13 school year, the following professional development was provided to the African Nova Scotian Student Support workers:

- Stress Management – full day presented by Gary Summers, September 28, 2012
- Africentric Conference: Developing Lesson plans for the African Nova Scotian Learner, Graham Creighton Junior High, Keynote Address – Dr. Jelani Jarbari, October 26, 2012
- Department of Education/African Canadian Services Division, Historical Perspective hosted by Dr. Afua Cooper, (a series of presenters and activities) November 15-16, 2012
- *Won't Back Down* (Viola Davis and Maggie Gyllenhael) – Motivational and Inspirational sharing of experiences and how they relate to maintaining focus on work with students, February 22, 2013

- **Recommendation #37**

More administrative attention be paid to the everyday classroom routines and activities, e.g., principals do a walkthrough with a focus on teacher preparedness in instruction and high-level interaction between educators and African Nova Scotian students.

HRSB Staff Response:

During the 2010 - 11 school years, educators participated in the Lens of Diversity in Teacher Performance Workshop:

- Focused discussions occurred regarding the teacher appraisal process as a tool in promoting and addressing culturally responsive teaching and equity within the classroom.
- Discussions included classroom observations, walkthroughs, reflective questions, etc.

Staff also participated in the Instructional Leadership Academy that provides leaders with the latest research and information.

Administrative attention to everyday classroom routines and activities is an ongoing best practice and is raised to principals at regular family of school meetings.

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- **Recommendation #40**

Teachers receive support on embedding Africentric content into a rigorous curricular framework focused on assisting students in developing numeracy and literacy.

HRSB Staff Response:

Between 2010-12, an African Nova Scotian coach worked with teachers on Afrocentric curriculum. The Student Support Workers Team provided math and literacy facilitators with career sessions focusing on serving African Nova Scotian students.

HRSB supports the annual Afrocentric conference hosted at Graham Creighton Junior High School.

To support teachers on embedding Africentric content into the curriculum, professional development for administrators was provided on the following topics:

- Cultural and Racial Make-up of your School (January– June 2010)
- Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (January– June 2010)
- Edwin Javius – Closing the Achievement Gap (August 2010 – June 2011)
- Cultural Proficiency Workshop (August 2012 – January 2013)

RCH Program Advisor works with schools on a regular basis in relation to curriculum resources and teacher support. As part of the implementation of the RCH in Learning Policy, training was provided between August 2011 and June 2012 on the following topics:

- ***Putting Theory into Practice.*** Principals were asked to come with examples of practices in place (or emerging practices) that bring the RCH in Learning Policy to life in their schools. They shared these practices and then discussed plans for the next steps in schools.
- ***Making Connections.*** A closer look at the principles of the RCH in Learning policy and the theoretical background that supports the policy. How does your school implement this policy?

CURRICULUM

- **Recommendation #19**

English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 courses continue to be developed and made available to more schools.

HRSB Staff Response:

The Halifax Regional School Board provides opportunities for teachers with expertise in this area to work with staff at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in the development and revision of African Nova Scotian courses.

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This course is available for selection in every HRSB high school. Offering the course depends on whether it is selected by students.

STUDENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Recommendation #27**

Administrators and other school officials become familiar with the parenting workshops to ensure that they are able to work in partnership with empowered parents.

HRSB Staff Response:

Through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, all administrators have received information on the parenting workshops (Handout was included in the Cultural Competency training January 2013). HRSB will continue to share this information as it becomes available.

- **Recommendation #28**

School administrators, teachers and families establish links between schools and the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program.

HRSB Staff Response:

The Black Educators Association (BEA) has met with Senior Staff of the board to begin a dialogue on how both organizations can work together to support African Nova Scotian students and their families. Working with BEA, HRSB has been able to arrange for parental permission to allow for the release of report cards to a tutor working with a student enrolled in the Cultural Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP).

Time will be allotted to bring information on the Cultural Academic Enrichment Program to the School Administrators. African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers and BEA Regional Educators have met annually to share information on CAEP and have distributed this to students.

PROGRAM REVIEW: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Recommendation #31**

School administrators review the level of integration of the SSW in the systems and structures of schools to ensure that the worker's role is clear, that the worker is able to influence the culture of the school as a whole, and that the worker can interact proactively with African Nova Scotian students and their families.

HRSB Staff Response:

HRSB has received the SSW guidelines from Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. These guidelines are used in the development and implementation of the African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers program.

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Two focus groups of principals, facilitated by School Administration staff in the fall of 2010, collected information regarding the role of the Student Support Worker in schools. This data was used to provide professional development to both the student support workers and the principals to improve service to African Nova Scotian students and their families.

SSW influence school culture, especially in addressing issues impacting African Nova Scotian learners.