

Purpose of this Guide:

To provide guidance to follow when addressing reports of racism and discrimination in schools. Staff and Administration should be informed whenever reports of racism and discrimination are made. Racism and discrimination have a harmful impact on student well-being and negatively impacts the school culture and climate. These incidents of racism require direct school intervention, including a full and unbiased investigation by administration. Surrey Schools is continuing to take steps to:

- Raise awareness and understanding about universal rights, racial equity, racism, and discrimination.
- Respond to all forms of racism, discrimination and exclusionary practices.
- Hold people who discriminate accountable.
- Make every intentional effort to prevent racism and discrimination.

Guide - Responding to Student Incidents of Racism and Discrimination

Racial Equity Department
September 2024

Key Actions of School Staff Working Together	
Stop It	Name It
Support	Report
Investigate	Document
Restore	Follow-Up

Questions to Consider for All Steps

1. Consider the power dynamics in terms of position and society. Recognize how your identity might be impacting how the parties speak to you and what you hear. You are now part of the dynamic. You (and the institution) are not neutral. If you feel unsuitable, seek out a colleague to take your place.
2. Are the parties given the option of bringing in a facilitator/advocate who might understand their situation more in terms of identity/context and power relations?

3. Interview each party separately and listen to the impact, validating and understanding as much as possible. How do you show care and that you take this complaint very seriously?
4. Recognize identity, and/or position differences of the parties, and how interpretations and ways of communicating, could be influenced by such differences.
5. You may not be viewed as neutral, are assumptions being made about a person's behaviour, body language, or other forms of communication in relation to identity?
6. Are racism and discrimination at play?

Our Commitment to Racial Equity

The Surrey School District is committed to upholding human rights, advancing racial equity, Truth and Reconciliation and creating safe and caring working and learning environments in all schools and district sites. Together, through clear and widely understood policies, practices, and resources, we strive to ensure that Indigenous, Black and racialized members of school communities, along with their families, are welcomed, accepted and included in all aspects of education and school life.

All staff have the collective responsibility to identify racist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours and strive to eliminate systemic inequalities and barriers for all. In consultation with the B.C. Ministry of Education and Child Care and other school districts in B.C. further supportive resources will be developed to assist in deeper understanding to identify and respond to racist incidents in schools.

School principals and vice-principals are committed to acting, including the use of restorative practices, when there is evidence of racism, discrimination, or oppression because of a person's actual or perceived race, ethnicity, identity (or intersectionality of identity), towards students and staff.

What is Racism?

Racism is the belief that one group, as defined by the colour of their skin or their perceived ancestry, is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in jokes, slurs, or hate speech, or can be more hidden in unconscious biases. Racism is deeply rooted in attitudes, values, and stereotypical beliefs.

More info/sources :
<https://www.surreyschools.ca/page/142645/racial-equity>

What is Discrimination

Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of grounds set out in the B.C. Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other, similar factors. It can include comments, actions, or decisions that make people feel unwelcome, or uncomfortable, based on their identity or ability. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of limiting access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination

Discrimination is defined by the B.C. Human Rights Code and is specific to :

- Race
- Colour
- Ancestry
- Place of origin
- Religion
- Ethnic origin
- Citizenship
- Marital or family status
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Sex (including gender identity)
- Sexual orientation
- Age

Responding to Student Incidents of Racism and Discrimination

Stop It

- Whenever possible, intervene immediately to stop the discriminatory act, and acknowledge what was said or done was inappropriate - we are teaching students that certain language and actions are hurtful and unacceptable in our schools.
- Respond empathetically and validate the student's experience and feelings (i.e. anger, hurt) - this will go a long way in de-escalating a potentially explosive situation.
- If possible, name the behaviour or discriminatory act (i.e. "You have just put someone down based on perceived (race/ethnicity, gender, age, etc.).
- Choose your words carefully and focus on the act/behaviour not the person (i.e. the comment is racist, as opposed to you are racist).
- Explain why the behaviour is hurtful and prohibited (i.e. "At this school, we respect everyone and are responsible for the impact of our words/behaviours.").
- Ensure that the dignity of all involved is made a priority (i.e. students directly involved, witnesses).
- All incidents of racism and discrimination must be reported to a principal/vice-principal.

Name It

Support

- Engage in courageous conversations to validate and understand what is happening, the impact on those involved and the opportunity for learning.
- **All staff are responsible for supporting any individual that has been affected by or witnessed an incident of discrimination.**
- Students may prefer to speak to a trusted adult in the school for guidance and support, parents/guardians may also be called as part of the process. Indigenous students may prefer an Indigenous community member or advocate for guidance and support.
- Support the individual(s) by finding a supportive space and talking with them about how you can support their well-being (ie. allow the student to **express their true feelings** without worrying about reprisals.)
- **Separate the individuals involved, if necessary and as appropriate.**
- Quietly check in with and reassure the individual who was harassed (i.e. Are you okay? Everyone should feel safe and be safe here. What happened was unacceptable, and you are very important to all of us.)
- Inform school administration of the incident and relevant details as soon as possible to allow for appropriate follow up and possible supportive/restorative next steps. Assure individual(s) concerns will be addressed.
- Document what occurred and the steps you took for your own records.

Report

Investigate

- It is important to investigate the situation in order to fully understand what is happening (reflect on the assumptions/judgements you may be making).
 - Ensure that the dignity/privacy of all involved is a priority and maintained at all times.
 - Consider bias and barriers to equity, including personal perceptions and assumptions being made (i.e. assuming guilt before investigating due to past incidents.).
 - In a timely manner, the principal/vice-principal will conduct preliminary fact-finding, in accordance with relevant procedures - at a minimum this will require a conversation with the involved parties.
 - Principal/vice-principals may be required to conduct a more formal investigation depending on the nature of the incident and the results of the preliminary fact-finding.
 - Principal/vice-principals will document throughout the process - date and time stamp all notes and interviews.
- Outcomes are determined using a balance of probabilities - you don't always need hard evidence. Consequences will vary by incident (s).
- Principal/vice-principals will contact the parent(s)/caregiver(s) to share what has happened and steps that are being taken.
 - Using a progressive discipline approach (i.e. early and ongoing interventions, range of options, consider individual circumstances and mitigating factors), decide on the appropriate course of action and consequences, in consultation with the superintendent team as needed.

Document

Restore

- Restore relationships and commit to ongoing monitoring and check-ins to proactively support a safe environment free from racism and discrimination.
- After the investigation has been completed, restore with the individuals as needed and appropriate, using principles of Restorative Practice.
- Ensure that there is no retribution for reporting an incident of racism and/or discrimination.
- Follow up with the individuals involved for a period of time following the incident,(i.e. check in on the students more frequently immediately following the incident).
- If appropriate, follow up with specific groups/classrooms.
- **Have ongoing conversations and learning about racism and discrimination.**

Follow-Up



Guidance for All Staff



Guidance for All Principals and Vice-Principals