Racial Equity Environmental Assessment

Secondary School *Report Draft*

The Racing to Equity Consulting Group
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Surrey Schools
LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING

RACING TO EQUITY

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Introduction

On behalf of the Racing to Equity Consulting Group, we are pleased to present the **Racial Equity Environmental Assessment** of Queen Elizabeth Secondary School. We have purposefully built on the legacy of Queen Elizabeth's commitment to academic excellence while providing recommended educational justice and equity-focused guidance for the future. We believe this has the potential to transform Queen Elizabeth Secondary School into a leader for advancing racial equity and educational justice while eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps in student learning.

This process began as part of Principal Magnusson's unwavering commitment to advancing educational justice and racial equity at Queen Elizabeth. Developing this report was a truly collaborative process involving eight listening circles with students, teachers, families, and administrators. The purpose of this qualitative data-gathering and exploration was to deepen understanding of the current culture at Queen Elizabeth from the perspective of its students, teachers, families, and administrators. This report captures these perspectives and translates them into a set of informed priorities for the school to implement. The report sets forth recommendations that are purposeful and directed towards setting a stronger culture of belonging, educational justice, and racial equity.

This environmental analysis was performed virtually during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Queen Elizabeth Leadership has engaged in the following measures to advance racial equity and educational justice at the school:

- Initiated a school-wide focus on shifting perspectives around racial equity and educational justice
- Partnered with Racing to Equity Consulting Group in order to identify current strengths and future steps in advancing racial equity and social justice
- Implemented restorative justice processes led by the district Safe Schools team to address specific instances of racism
- Provided three days of full-day professional development that empowered staff to recognize and confront instances of racism within the school
- Met regularly with the newly-established anti-racism work group, which leverages the experience and expertise of the staff, including IBPOC members and other passionate social justice advocates
- Created space for the anti-racism work group to effect relevant and meaningful change by scheduling space for anti-racist instruction at staff meetings and by offering further professional development through anti-racist readings during the summer

> The report sets forth recommendations that are purposeful and directed towards setting a stronger culture of belonging, educational justice, and racial equity.

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- Participated in Pro-D and district-offered anti-racism workshops to gain a deeper understanding of historical oppression and to recognize and evaluate areas of personal privilege
- Facilitated transparency and open communication by sharing preliminary findings of the equity report from Racing to Equity consulting group with staff and PAC, with space for discussion
- Worked with students to craft an anti-oppression pledge, to be taught as part of Queen Elizabeth's regular student culture moving forward
- Encouraged the efforts of the IBPOC Liberation Collective, a student-initiated and student-run antiracism group which has already worked to honor IBPOC contributions during Black History Month and which continues its work in organizing student forums on racism
- Increased awareness about the need for adequate and thoughtful responses to the issues of racism within the school community, with a goal of providing restorative education for those engaged in racism, providing justice for those who are harmed by racism, and providing support for those who are exposed to racism at the school
- Recognized that the above measures merely mark initial steps in addressing racial inequity and social injustice, and acknowledged increased student and parent engagement as one method of working as a community towards social justice and racial equity

Queen Elizabeth students were particularly courageous and candid and actively contributed insightful feedback, providing suggestions based on their lived experiences at Queen Elizabeth. Although Queen Elizabeth has started to implement strategies to advance racial equity school-wide, students called for further work in promoting culturally responsive, socially-just instruction that applies personalized learning to the real world and in employing additional strategies to meet the needs of students experiencing racism, sexism, classism, colorism, and poverty. Furthermore, students sought more proactive guidance in preparing them for post K-12 experiences and a structure that reflects student voice by policy.

Teachers asked to prioritize professional development focused on strategies to advance racial equity and educational justice that can be integrated into their regular teaching practice. Families and community members urged the school to further honor and value families as partners in supporting their students' education and development. In light of this, the recommendations center the development of a systemic and transformational approach at Queen Elizabeth to ensure the safety and well-being of every student.

The successful implementation of the recommendations will continue to rest on inclusion of the following: sustained student voices in decision-making, consistent community engagement, and regular developmental improvement progress checks. These progress checks must include voices from ethnically and linguistically diverse communities—especially those of Indigenous and Black students and families—in order to best assess the true impact of racial and social justice efforts on Queen Elizabeth's community members.

This report seeks to identify educational and institutional strengths and challenges at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School. Identifying these strengths and needs, paired with specific and concrete recommendations for moving forward, will help the school to further promote racial equity and the principles of educational justice in school leadership, teaching practices, values, mission, strategies, and hallways to create a space where every student can thrive. We hope to help Queen Elizabeth become a space where students can identify historical and current forms of racism, can learn social justice, and can grow in an intentionally safe and welcoming environment for all. We hope that this report elevates the voices of your students, teachers, families, and administrators who provided invaluable input and that their experiences and perspectives are honored accordingly in our findings and recommendations. We are heartened as we continue to lean forward towards advancing racial equity and educational excellence with Queen Elizabeth and Surrey Schools.

Context

Queen Elizabeth Secondary School is a medium-sized inner-city high school in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver BC. The school is located in the core of the city, along a major thoroughfare, and across the street from a major metropolitan hospital. Approximately 1500 students attend Queen Elizabeth Secondary. Seventy percent of incoming students identify themselves as black, Indigenous or persons of colour, with just over 50% of students identifying as South Asian, including Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi. Other students of colour indicate that their roots are from Southeast Asia (Philippines, Vietnam, Hong Kong). Eighty percent of incoming students say that they speak a language other than English at home. Common languages students speak at home include Punjabi, Urdu, Farsi, Tagalog and Arabic. Many students report living in multigenerational and/or mixed family homes.

The school prides itself in its support of students and families in need in the community. As the beneficiary of several community grants, Equity of Opportunity funding, Surrey Fire Fighter Food Support, and seasonal corporate assistance, Queen Elizabeth Secondary operates one of the most robust youth care rooms and support programs in the school district. From this space a large free breakfast and lunch program is provided to many students along with a clothing bank and support groups for students struggling at home and/or with peers. Full-time Community-Schools Partnership staff, also run after school programs to provide mentorship to students who could benefit from guidance.

Along with its support of students, Queen Elizabeth Secondary prides itself on a large and active Athletics program, offering varsity and intermural sports in fall, winter, and spring seasons. Soccer, Basketball, and Ultimate Frisbee teams are frequently top ranked in the city and region. Students also study an array of traditional and modern disciplines. Students are engaged in the usual Humanities and Sciences, along with Fine and Performing Arts, Robotics, Industrial Technology and Culinary Arts. Queen Elizabeth is host to the district's largest CO-OP program, with almost 200 students engaging in work-experience placements each year. This past year, Queen Elizabeth graduates attracted over half a million dollars in scholarship offers, including awards from the Loran, Schulich, and Cmolik organizations.

70%

of incoming students identify themselves as **black, Indigenous or persons of colour**.

80%

of incoming students say that they **speak a language other than English** at home.

Queen Elizabeth Secondary operates **one of the most robust** youth care rooms and support programs in the school district.

Methodology

A qualitative methodological approach will provide an in-depth analysis of Queen Elizabeth Secondary School's current systemic efforts to promote racial equity and inclusion. Analysis of data collected will inform key recommendations for advancing efforts to strengthen policies and services for cultivating culturally, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse and responsive school environment to best serve Queen Elizabeth's students. Furthermore, qualitative methodology emphasizes an inductive approach, which refers to the process of deriving general meaning and insights by working "backwards" from particulars, rather than "forwards" in a deductive fashion from already established theoretical formulations. The primary concern of qualitative research is to find meaning in context. In other words, qualitative research evaluators examine how different people make sense of their lives. This type of data will reveal the "heart and soul" of the school.

Our main source of qualitative data is a series of eight two-hour virtual listening circles during June 2021 with students, educators, family, and community members. Using the listening circle method, participants were asked a series of interview questions from a protocol template that was then modified for each stakeholder group (Appendix A). Participants were asked questions related to belonging, educational justice, racial equity, diversity, and inclusion at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School. During the start of each virtual listening circle, we connected first with our humanity by engaging in introductions, honoring land acknowledgments, addressing the purpose of listening circles, and assuring confidentiality for all participants. The following is a brief description of each Listening Circle:

Educators

Family and Community

Listening Circles

Student

Participants were asked questions related to belonging, educational justice, racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Educators Listening Circles

- Two virtual listening circles with educators were scheduled
- Each session was held for two hours
- 13 educators/staff members participated, from a total staff of approximately 120
- Racing to Equity staff alternated between asking questions and scribing answers
- Follow-up questions were asked as needed to clarify educator responses
- Educators had the opportunity to ask questions and/or make additional comments throughout the listening circle
- There were nine standardized questions, excluding additional follow up questions

Family and Community Members Listening Circles

- One virtual listening circle with family and community members was scheduled
- The listening session was held for two hours
- Interpreters were made available during the listening session
- 9 families/community members participated
- Racing to Equity staff alternated between asking questions and scribing answers
- Follow-up questions were asked as needed to clarify family and community member responses
- Family and community members had the opportunity to ask questions and/or make additional comments throughout the listening circle
- There were nine standardized questions, excluding additional follow up questions

Student Listening Circles

- Five virtual listening circles with students were scheduled
- The listening session was held for two hours
- 67 students (most of whom identified as students of color)participated in total, from a total school population of approximately 1480
- Interpreters were made available
- Racing to Equity staff alternated between asking questions and scribing answers
- Follow-up questions were asked as needed to clarify student responses
- Students had the opportunity to ask questions and/or make additional comments throughout the listening circle
- There were eleven standardized questions, excluding additional follow up questions

13
educators/staff
members
participated

9
families/community
members
participated

67
students
participated
in total

Findings

All three stakeholder groups expressed pride in the diversity within the school and in the relationships between various stakeholders, especially between students and teachers. All groups also noted that Indian and Southeast Asian cultures seem to be the most celebrated and accepted within the school. Other racial and ethnic groups were referred to as the minority group while Southeast Asians were referred to as a majority group.

Themes Across All Groups

Three major themes were identified from the listening circles:

1) A deep need to build on current relationships and to strengthen trust with school administrators

2) A need to develop, implement, and communicate clear and transparent pathways for accountability with all stakeholders; and

3) A need to advance anti-racist education opportunities for all stakeholders.

Students, staff, and families interviewed indicated the strong need to build on current relationships and to strengthen trust with school administrators. Findings from our listening circles revealed a lack of trust towards the administration stemming from the following concerns among students, staff, family, and community leaders:

- Student respondents indicated that they have experience prejudice, racism, colorism, and classism at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School
- There was a general consensus among respondents in looking for more transparency and commitment to advancing racial equity and educational justice from the administration
- Some students also felt that school staff did not acknowledge their personal experiences when shared
- Students and families felt that the school is not proactively leading policies and plans to move the school forward towards educational justice and racial equity
- When students were asked to talk about how they feel about being a student at Queen Elizabeth, students reflected on their encounters with racism, sexism, homophobia, and other discriminatory behaviors that they had witnessed or experienced themselves
- Students further expressed hesitation and reluctance to share and seek assistance from school staff due to fears that their concerns or reports would be dismissed or not appropriately addressed
- Students were also concerned about anonymity and privacy in reporting issues of discrimination and inequity, which created a barrier for students in seeking help at Queen Elizabeth

Themes Across All Groups

1	A deep need to build on current relationships and to strengthen trust with school administrators
2	A need to develop, implement, and communicate clear and transparent pathways for accountability with all stakeholders; and
3	A need to advance anti-racist education opportunities for all stakeholders.

Participants agreed that the relationship between students and the school must grow significantly in order to meet the needs of all parties. Students highlighted the need for increasing accountability for racist and sexually abusive behaviors. They felt that measures taken by the school in the past often did not appropriately address the issues, and felt ignored and/or dismissed after reporting incidents. Two broader themes arose: 1) the strong desire for accountability amongst all stakeholders and 2) the need for meaningful and proactive anti-racism education. All stakeholders involved—educators, families, and students—emphasized the importance of holding individuals accountable for discriminatory and harmful behaviors.

Furthermore, families and other community members observed that for students to fully trust in the system, the school must take immediate steps to publicly prioritize and develop a policy to develop a culture that values racial equity and educational justice which does not tolerate discrimination.

In order to create a school system that promotes racial equity and educational justice, all groups felt that anti-racism education should begin from a young age, and that staff should be provided greater training in support of this goal. Educators in the group reported regularly incorporating educational justice and racial equity in their curriculum but felt under-equipped to adequately teach students about these topics. Providing dedicated time, resources, training, and more extensive systemic support would allow teachers to better prepare themselves—allowing them to then best serve their students.

A Brief history of the Queen Elizabeth Mural
- Queen Elizabeth leadership reached out to the original artist of the gym in order to add character and appeal to The Hub
- Students and staff formed a work group to provide feedback on artist concepts
- The work group provided feedback asking for the incorporation of an Indigenous element to the Hub design
- Accordingly, an Indigenous artist with preexisting positive relationship with the school and community was invited to collaborate on the Hub design
- The Indigenous artist designed a feature on the south wall of The Hub and collaborated with the original artist for background painting. The work group continued to provide feedback during the process
- Parts of the design were mounted, cut by a C&C company, and painted by two students under the guidance of the Indigenous artist Indigenous
- The complete design was mounted in spring and an unveiling ceremony held in the following fall

Some of the students and staff voiced concerns about different aspects of the mural. The art was referenced several times with all stakeholders. The iconography and history of the Bengal Tiger (school mascot) in relation to Queen Elizabeth (school namesake) and the colonial history in India has been a topic of conversation amongst some staff members in recent years, especially as much of the school population have ancestry and relations there. Inclusion of this imagery in the North wall of the mural was perceived as insensitive and offensive, a perpetuation of racism by some. The South wall of the mural was developed to honor, value and dignify the Indigenous cultures represented at Queen Elizabeth. For some, it is representative of performative allyship—dredging up fears that anti-racist work in Queen Elizabeth will fail to address any meaningful issues of systemic inequity. One of the students who painted the mural reported that she felt tremendous pride in the artwork, and felt it was a valuable and meaningful piece of art that would help the Indigenous community feel welcome, seen, and valued in the school. Students would have preferred the funds be spent on mitigating the effects of systemic inequity: providing school supplies, textbooks, and technology to all students, and to enable greater access to sports and other extracurricular activities through scholarships.

Students, staff, and families interviewed indicated the strong need to build on current relationships and to strengthen trust with school administrators.

In the next portion of our findings, we will hear the voices of the stakeholders.

Educators

Educators' positive comments centered on their students. They spoke of diversity at the school, dedication to students, and the students themselves. Many referenced the collaborative and relational nature of the school, and the common desire for improvement, though this perception varied by individual. One educator recounted, "when I started here, I did not feel very supported, and I felt a lot of gaslighting when issues of racial justice were brought up." Regardless, all participants strongly agreed that Queen Elizabeth should focus on advancing educational equity and social justice for its students. Education is more than about academic content—math, English, etc.—participants felt strongly that the educational system should also teach students about social justice. An educator observed, "I think we all have unique identities, and we need to add that to our curriculum which will create a more meaningful, transformative educational experience."

Overall, educators felt that they and their colleagues are taking positive and concrete steps to increase educational justice and racial equity. Staff referenced work at the individual and departmental levels to directly affect student school experiences. For example, teachers mentioned integrating student home culture into classroom lessons as well as decisions to move away from Eurocentric perspectives and voices in history and literature. They also spoke about discussing issues of racism and oppression with students in the classroom, as well as engaging in anti-racist work groups at school.

Attitudes varied, however, in terms of comfort level in discussing topics of institutional racism, educational justice, and racial equity with colleagues and students. There was a group who reported feeling very comfortable discussing these topics and sought to engage in proactive conversations with other staff members and students but in general, personal comfort varied depending on both the audience and the subject. Staff members expressed it was easier to talk about these issues in a delineated safe space, such as in an anti-racism group. They also reported it was easier to talk about overt or personal instances of racism rather than the more subtle institutional forms. Finally, staff members noted the difference between comfortably talking about racial equity and competently addressing and dismantling systemic inequities. When asked how Queen Elizabeth and the Surrey Schools leadership could proactively support educators in having these discussions and in taking action, several themes emerged:

As with educators, family and community members were proud of the diversity at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School and regarded relationships between teachers and students positively.

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1) the need for more time, resources, and training **2)** the importance of administration leading the initiatives of advancing educational justice **3)** transparency about their anti-racist plans and goals and **4)** increased accountability for discriminatory behaviors in advancing these goals.

Educators were unable to identify specific institutional strategies implemented at Queen Elizabeth to eliminate systemic inequities. They were also unaware of any formal process to adequately address instances of racism within school. Given previous observations, staff seem to be confident in addressing issues and affecting change in their immediate spheres of control—classrooms and departments.

However, there is an implicit understanding that broader institutional change must be led by the administration in order to be effective. One participant expressed frustration, noting, "I'm tired of folks grappling with the idea that racism exists – you had a whole summer last year after a global uprising to learn more about racism; we're past that stage and you need to be doing some action. It's not our job to constantly be educating our administration on anti-racism."

As with educators, family and community members were proud of the diversity at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School and regarded relationships between teachers and students positively. Furthermore, family and community members were generally in agreement about the importance of focusing on advancing educational equity and social justice at school. However, responses did range, with one parent noting, "social justice is extraordinarily important, and I think it's absent in the schools" while another remarked, "is there a problem today? Is there a gap today?"

A similar pattern can be found throughout the responses in this particular focus group, with general agreements and positive trends encompassing a wider range of attitudes and opinions. Family and community members felt that the school was respectful of different cultures and languages, though there were some observations around which cultures were most actively celebrated and embraced within the school. Families' perceptions of school support in discussing and addressing academic goals and dreams varied significantly depending on personal experience with individual staff members. Families who felt well- supported pointed to one-on-one meetings to discuss student goals and teachers taking personal interest in their students' success. Others expressed a desire for increased support, especially those with special education services and in instances of detached or disinterested teachers. When asked what educators could do to create a safe learning environment for students, racism and bullying were of greatest concern. Families requested increased responses to immediate safety concerns such as racist and homophobic bullying, but also expressed a desire for preventative measures including anti-racist education, lessons on appropriate use of technology, social media, and anti-bullying education.

Although participants spoke highly of the relationship between students and teachers, the same cannot be said of the perceived relationship between students and The School as an institution. Families identified transparency as a way of establishing and strengthening trust. "The issue of the n-word at QE is notorious. We have to take it on concretely and directly. There needs to be enough staff present to catch it and put an end to it immediately. I think that whatever the staff do has to be public so they can win back the trust of the youth." The participants expressed an interest in partnering with the school through greater family engagement and family information sessions in order to grow a more robust and cohesive school community. It is important to engage each stakeholder group that represents the Surrey Schools in the advancement of racial equity and social justice.

Student Group

Students at Queen Elizabeth expressed pride in the schools' athletic successes, the facilities, and extracurricular activities available. Relationships also factored heavily in their answers, with students remarking positively about the relationships with their teachers, the diversity within the school, and the school's tight-knit community. As with the family and community group, students perceived their relationships with teachers and students as different from their relationship with The School as an institution. These perceptions are rooted in negative personal experiences with either with other students or with staff. Negative experiences with students often took the form of personal bullying or direct discrimination. For example:

- "Sometimes the school just makes me feel unwelcome, disgusted, cause at this school I feel like most people are racist towards black people and I've had people call me the n- word."
- "When you're biracial, I feel like people don't understand that you never really fit into one group. I would get called like a "dirty black person" and comments like that."

Conversely, students frequently held negative attitudes towards the school as an institution based on the perceived lack of adequate and appropriate action. For students, dismissing an instance of racism or discrimination may be considered as harmful as committing the action itself. Though students did mention discriminatory remarks coming from school staff, the more egregious factor seems to be the break in trust related to lack of staff support following these events.

- "There's a lot of sexism in the school and a lot of comments towards girls on Slap Ass Fridays... When I came forward about this in Grade 8, I was more shunned upon and didn't get any justice – they just went off with a warning."
- "Honestly, I'm not proud of being a QE student, if someone would ask me what school I went to I wouldn't even want to say because the entire school is based off racism, sexism and we're not treated fairly at all. I've had multiple incidents where I've been targeted racially and have been assaulted and no one did anything."
- Most students described the relationship between students and teachers as positive.

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However, this relationship does not include all staff, especially those that represent the school as an institution.

Though students want to trust the adults at school and want to seek assistance in addressing problems of discrimination and bias, interactions with individual staff members have prevented the school from being a safe and welcoming space for all students. In order to create a proactive and productive space for change, students expressed a desire for increased accountability following instances of racism and discrimination. They also impressed the need for transparency in how staff members have chosen to address the situations as they arise. This will require a thoughtful approach as schools are required to protect privacy of individuals.

Students were asked how teachers and staff respect different ethnicities and cultures. The answers touched upon several positive aspects of building-wide practices: events to celebrate different cultures, the explicit teaching of Indigenous history, and multilingual home communications. However, they also noted problems with individual staff members, including one staff member's use of the term "you colored people."

These interactions have impacted how students relate to the school. Many students said that they do not feel comfortable expressing their cultural identity at school. This attitude is promoted sometimes through staff responses and sometimes through student comments: students reported bullying around cultural food, religiously based discrimination, and the use of racial slurs. Of note, students perceived certain cultures as celebrated and accepted over others.

When asked how educators can help create a safer learning environment, students highlighted the need to explicitly and deliberately honor a wide range of cultures and identities. According to students, these celebrations should be inclusive of not just different ethnicities and languages, but of other identity markers such as gender and sexual identity, ability, and mental health status. As several students noted that much of the current anti-racism and equity work feels performative, future work should include student input and voice in order to genuinely reflect the students of Queen Elizabeth.
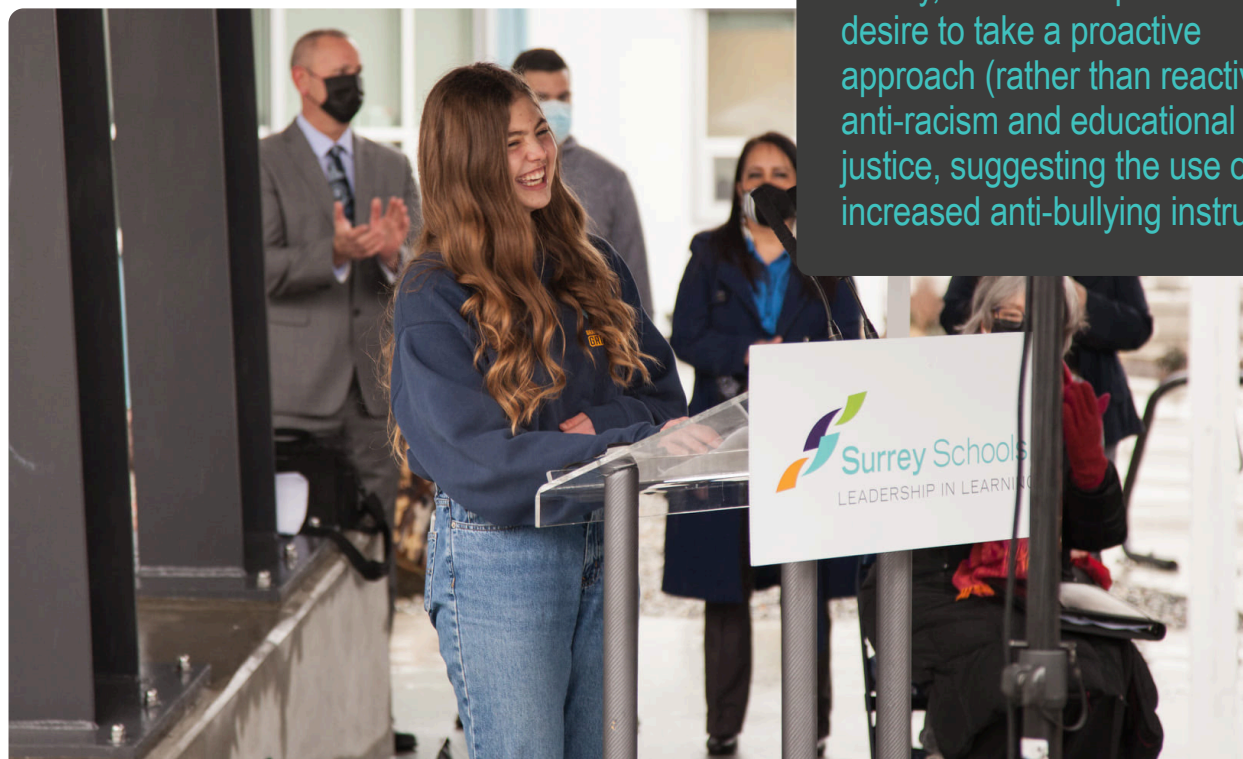
Finally, students expressed a desire to take a proactive approach (rather than reactive) to anti-racism and educational justice, suggesting the use of increased anti-bullying instruction.

Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined above, we are making a series of recommendations, sorted into four categories:

1	**Workforce Development**
2	**Family and Community Engagement**
3	**Leadership Accountability**
4	**Student Accountability and Support**

Within each of the four categories are three specific recommendations—one focused on policy development, one focused on organizational systems, and one which is a broader strategy. For each recommendation there is the theory of change as well as an action plan for implementing the recommendation. These recommendations and action plans are not all-encompassing, but are a starting point for helping Queen Elizabeth Secondary School move towards racial equity and educational justice.

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Workforce Development

*A. Recommendations & Theory of Change
for Workforce Development*

Policy	Promote anti-racist, culturally responsive, and inclusive pedagogical teaching and leadership practices.
Organizational	Strengthen and expand supports for IBPOC students and staff members at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.
Strategy	Offer Pro-D to teachers that is culturally responsive and focused on how to address and eliminate sexist and racist behaviors from students and staff.

Level of Change	Recommendations	Theory of Change
1. Policy	Adopt anti-racist, culturally responsive, and inclusive pedagogical teaching and leadership practices.	If anti-racist, culturally responsive, and inclusive components are formally included in teaching curriculum and staff evaluations, then Queen Elizabeth will increase racial and cultural awareness which will support staff in honoring, valuing, and dignifying the contributions of IBPOC students and their families.
2. Organizational	Strengthen and expand supports for IBPOC students and staff members at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.	If Queen Elizabeth Secondary School supports IBPOC teachers and staff in improving their practice, then it will promote staff retention and allow students to have more role models that reflect the student body.
3. Strategy	Offer professional development to teachers that is culturally responsive and focused on how to address and eliminate sexist and racist behaviors from students	If Queen Elizabeth co-develops—with educators—anti-racist, culturally responsive, and inclusive professional development then every teacher in the school will be better positioned to meet the needs of IBPOC students in their classrooms.

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B. Action Plan for Each Recommendation

Recommendation 1: Promote anti-racist, culturally responsive, and inclusive pedagogical teaching and leadership practices.

→ Establish and provide support for a Racial Equity Team at Queen Elizabeth to lead culturally responsive teaching curriculum, instructional strategies, and practices where the histories are taught from various perspectives where students of all backgrounds feel respected, and treated in a dignifying manner. It is recommended that the team include various stakeholders from diverse backgrounds representative of the Queen Elizabeth student body.

→ Work with the district Aboriginal Learning Department to promote greater opportunities for learning of Aboriginal experiences and perspectives for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and families. Increasing resources for the Aboriginal Department come from District funds not school funds.

→ Increase Indigenous family and community engagement, particularly elders, in teaching Indigenous histories through story telling.

→ Work collaboratively with the District Team to build culturally responsive Teacher Performance reviews.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen and supports for IBPOC students, families, and staff members at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.

→ Conduct monthly meetings between the Principal and VPs and IBPOC school staff to share experiences, concerns, and suggestions for support.

→ Recruit educators and school staff with IBPOC heritage to be reflective of the Queen Elizabeth student population.

→ Work with the district to develop and implement anonymous staff survey so staff can safely provide input and feedback on leadership, professional development, and coaching in advancing racial equity and educational justice at Queen Elizabeth

→ Increase overall IBPOC family and community engagement by inviting IBPOC parents, family members and community leaders as guest speakers to school events.

Recommendation 3: Offer professional development to teachers that is culturally responsive and focused on how to address sexist and racist behaviors from students and staff.

→ Offer professional development so that Queen Elizabeth educators and school staff can participate in anti-racist and   culturally responsive and inclusive training.

→ Encourage and facilitate staff opportunities for participating in anti-racist and culturally responsive and inclusive training.

→ Work with the district around ways to have cultural responsiveness and inclusiveness reflected in staff evaluations.

→ Provide professional development for administrators to develop culturally responsive standards on their evaluations.

Family and Community Engagement

A. Recommendations & Theory of Change for Family and Community Engagement

Policy	Adopt practices to ensure decision-making is informed by student, family, and school staff participation.
Organizational	Offer staff professional development on how to effectively partner with and ethnically and linguistically diverse families to support student learning.
Strategy	Strengthen support for partnerships and relationships with families and community members as a viable strategy to elevate student learning and social emotional development.

Level of Change	Recommendations	Theory of Change
1. Policy	Adopt practices to ensure decision-making is informed by student, family, and school staff participation.	If Queen Elizabeth Leadership engages students, families, and school staff on a regular basis to ask for their input and feedback, then classroom and school decisions will be co-designed, leading to a learning environment that meets student needs while increasing student investment in learning.
2. Organizational	Offer staff professional development on how to effectively partner with ethnically and linguistically diverse families to support student learning.	If the school provides family engagement professional development for administrative staff, VPs, teachers, and support staff, then internal stakeholders will be more equipped to work with families as equitable partners in the education of their students.
3. Strategy	Strengthen support for partnerships and relationships with families and community members as a viable strategy to elevate student learning and socio-emotional development.	If the school strengthens support to encourage and improve family and community engagement, then families will be better equipped to support the healthy development and educational outcome of their children.

B. Action Plan for Each Recommendation

Recommendation 1: Adopt practices to ensure decision-making is informed by student, family, and school staff participation.

→ Design a student survey that includes questions about the school's effectiveness in providing and engaging in culturally responsive teaching and leadership practices.
→ Host student forums that allow students to actively participate in the decision-making process.
→ Provide opportunities for the Principals and Vice Principals to engage with and learn from students to improve professional practice.
→ Create regular opportunities to capture and respond to feedback provided by families and develop systems to ensure that this feedback informs school-wide decisions that impact students.
→ Provide interpreters for non-English speaking parents and translate all written communication for all necessary languages.

Recommendation 2: Offer staff professional development on how to effectively partner with and ethnically and linguistically diverse families to support student learning.

→ Offer opportunities to continue to strengthen family engagement in education.
→ Offer opportunities to learn about culturally responsive family engagement training strategies to principals and vice principals, teachers, and support staff to better understand how to work with ethnically and linguistically diverse families and community members.
→ Utilize current educators who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive family engagement training to help other staff more effectively partner with ethnically and linguistically diverse families.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen support for partnerships and relationships with families and community members as a viable strategy to elevate student learning and social emotional development.

Explore processes to guide school and district staff to engage parents/families meaningfully and intentionally to help to support student learning at home, at school and in the community.

→ Work with the district to promote ways for families to navigate the school system and application processes more effectively.
→ Explore ways in which the administration can share, in general, processes or systems in place to advance racial equity and education both proactively and in response to incidents

Leadership Accountability

A. Recommendations & Theory of Change
for Leadership Accountability

Policy
Expand anti-racist, culturally sustaining leadership practices throughout the leadership team at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.

Organizational
Develop specific leadership protocols to better address issues of racism and harassment at Queen Elizabeth.

Strategy
Create and implement a school-based plan for promoting racial equity and educational justice that is communicated to all staff, students, family members, and other stakeholders in the Queen Elizabeth community.

Level of Change	Recommendations	Theory of Change
1. Policy	Expand anti-racist, culturally sustaining leadership practices throughout the leadership team at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.	If anti-racist, culturally sustaining leadership practices are expanded to all level of Queen Elizabeth's leadership team, then the leadership will be well-equipped to support their IBPOC students and staff, while creating an inclusive and equitable school environment.
2. Organizational	Develop specific leadership protocols to better address issues of racism and harassment at Queen Elizabeth.	If the school leadership develops protocols to address issues of racism and other forms of harassment and discrimination, then the school will create an environment that is safe and supportive for all students and staff, especially for those who are Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color.
3. Strategy	Create and implement a school-based plan for promoting racial equity and educational justice that is communicated to all staff, students, family members, and other stakeholders in the Queen Elizabeth community.	If the leadership at Queen Elizabeth creates a racial equity plan and communicates this to all stakeholders, they will have a clear strategy for moving forward in promoting equity, it will help repair relationships with other stakeholders through transparency, and will create a culture of accountability for everyone in the school.

B. Action Plan for Each Recommendation

Recommendation 1: Adopt anti-racist, culturally sustaining leadership practices throughout the leadership team at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.

→ Provide opportunities for all members of Queen Elizabeth's leadership team to participate in anti-racist, culturally responsive, and inclusive professional development.

→ Include cultural responsiveness and inclusiveness as part of leadership evaluations.

→ Develop a plan for identifying and addressing white cultural norms within the leadership of Queen Elizabeth Secondary School and incorporating anti-racist, inclusive practices.

→ Seek opportunities for the use of a racial equity lens for all decision-making processes moving forward to ensure that future policies, programs, and procedures address issues of racism and other forms of inequities.

Recommendation 2: Develop specific leadership protocols to better address issues of racism and harassment at Queen Elizabeth.

→ Create safe ways for staff, students, and families to report instances of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination to the school's leadership team.

→ Develop a process to bring people along to advance racial equity and social justice.

→ Utilize feedback from staff, students, and families to develop these protocols.

→ Work with IBPOC students, staff, and families to create a plan for dealing with instances of racism, sexism, and other forms of harm caused by school administrators and staff.

→ Communicate this protocol to all students, staff, and families to promote transparency and accountability.

→ Seek opportunities for all members of Queen Elizabeth's leadership team to receive training in conflict resolution and restorative justice.

→ A District or school acknowledgment and apology for past and current harm and lack of accountability and make clear and specific commitment to doing better in the future.

Recommendation 3: Create and implement a school-based plan for promoting racial equity and educational justice that is communicated to all staff, students, family members, and other stakeholders in the Queen Elizabeth community.

→ Seek to identify inequity in access and outcomes among Queen Elizabeth students.

→ Using the information from the analysis, this report, and further input from staff, students, and family members, use a nationally or internationally recognized racial equity and social justice framework to establish a racial equity and educational justice policy that will identify, acknowledge, and address the historic and institutional racism at Queen Elizabeth, which has undermined the educational opportunities of IBPOC students.

→ Include clear, specific, and measurable goals with planned progress checks and accountability mechanisms.

→ Use the process of creating this plan to normalize the conversation on racial equity and educational justice and to create common language and clear definitions for the terms "racial equity" and "educational justice" to actively dismantle institutional racism and education injustice.

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Student Accountability and Support

*A. Recommendations & Theory of Change
for Student Accountability and Support*

Level of Change	Recommendations	Theory of Change
1. Policy	Adopt anti-racist, anti- sexual harassment student agreements to develop a culture of inclusivity and belonging at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.	If anti-racist and anti-harassment agreements are made with students, then it will be demonstrated to students that the school is committed to making changes and can be held accountable for harmful behavior.
2. Organizational	Develop systems of support for IBPOC students and students who identify as female and/or LGBTQIA2S+ for them to feel and be safe at Queen Elizabeth.	If Queen Elizabeth develops systems of support for IBPOC, female, and LGBTQIA2S+ students, then these students will feel safer and be safer at school, and it will demonstrate to all students that the administration stands with these students and will not tolerate harassment of these students.
3. Strategy	Develop a school-wide orientation for all students focused on advancing an environment of belonging, ensuring social justice, and eliminating the use of racial and sexist slurs.	If the school implements a school-wide orientation for all students, then students at Queen Elizabeth will be set up for success to treat one another with respect and kindness, recognize and call out instances of discrimination, and help co-create a welcoming and safe school environment for all.

B. Action Plan for Each Recommendation

Recommendation 1: Adopt anti-racist, anti-sexual harassment student agreements to develop a culture of inclusivity and belonging at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.

→ Work directly with students, including those who have experienced past harm, to develop a set of agreements that all students must adhere to, with an explicit focus on anti-racism and anti-sexual harassment.

→ As part of the agreements, develop a clear policy for the use of racial slurs and sexual harassment.

→ Develop accountability mechanisms for when agreements are not adhered to, rooted in principles of restorative justice.

Recommendation 2: Develop systems of support for IBPOC students and students who identify as female and/or LGBTQIA2S+ for them to feel and be safe at Queen Elizabeth.

→ Work directly with students who hold these identities to ask what supports are necessary.

→ Utilize staff who hold similar identities to build relationships with students.

→ Create affinity groups/clubs for students so they have spaces where they feel safe—ask students what they would like these groups to look like and if they want them.

→ Seek opportunities for all teachers, staff, and administrators to participate in professional learning related to supporting students who have experienced racism, sexism, and heterosexism and how to resolve conflict in a way that is rooted in restorative justice.

Recommendation 3: Develop a school-wide orientation for all students focused on advancing an environment of belonging, ensuring social justice, and eliminating the use of racial and sexist slurs.

→ In collaboration with IBPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ students and staff, develop an outline for a yearly school-wide orientation, to be conducted every year during the first week of the school year.

→ Utilizing best practices for working with teens, develop an engaging orientation based on the co-created outline that addresses cultivating an environment of belonging, introduces issues of social justice, and involves making a commitment to the student agreements for anti-racism and anti-sexual harassment.

→ Utilize breakout groups by grade to build on students' social justice knowledge each year.

→ Work with students to help facilitate and lead the orientation.

→ As part of the orientation, it is recommended that teachers, staff, and admin publicly declare their own commitment to anti-racism, share updates on the school's anti- racism strategy, and outline measures of accountability for all (including teachers, staff, admin, students, family members, and anyone else that is part of the Queen Elizabeth community).

Conclusion

For far too long, Canada as a nation has carried the burden and the weight of the mythology of a hierarchy of human value, allowing it to weigh down Black, Indigenous, and other Communities of Color and negatively impact their lives. This gives a special sense of resolve to our racial equity and educational justice hypothesis that proactively, meaningfully, and intentionally addresses these inequities with culturally sustaining leadership and practices can lift each and every one of our students to academic excellence. Most of the children born today in Canada and the world are children of color. Thus, creating an inclusive environment that allows them to realize their full potential is one of the most important things that Queen Elizabeth Secondary School must do.

It is of paramount significance that through this assessment we have found that a majority of internal and external stakeholders who participated in this environmental analysis acknowledge that racism still exists, and that it perpetuates racialized bias in the educational opportunities provided at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School.

Overall, the data collected demonstrates that advancing educational justice and racial equity within Queen Elizabeth is the best path forward. We are heartened by the brilliance, strength, and courage that your students showcased and there is a palpable desire from educators for positive change and to institutionalize racial equity and educational justice to eliminate the opportunity and achievement gaps that IBPOC students are currently experiencing.

Adaptive leadership for racial equity means that leaders are seen as hosts who promote, enhance, and tap the inner workings of productive human interactions and relationships. It is important to emphasize that advancing racial equity and educational justice at Queen Elizabeth is a lifelong journey that never ends. It is far more than a schoolwide formal conversation about race—while dialogue is strongly encouraged, if that is the only action, it minimizes the broader, comprehensive work that needs to be done to support the academic and social emotional well- being of each and every child who comes into your care. Clear commitments must be made with purposeful and strategic actions to back them up.

We are inspired to share the optimism shown by the many members of each of your stakeholder groups, all of whom are ready and willing to courageously engage in this crucial work. We believe that acting on the recommendations provided in this report, coupled with the commitment of the Queen Elizabeth community, will result in transformational change within Queen Elizabeth and a strong move towards racial equity and educational justice for all students and staff.

The data collected demonstrates that advancing educational justice and racial equity within Queen Elizabeth is the best path forward.

Strengths and Limitations

It is important to know the strengths and limitations of qualitative research method techniques. According to Anderson (2010)[1], strengths include: **1)** issues can be examined in detail and in depth, **2)** interviews are not necessarily restricted to specific questions and can be guided or redirected by researchers in real time, **3)** the research framework can be revised as new information arises, **4)** data is based on human experience and that can often be more powerful than relying solely on quantitative data, **5)** although findings cannot be generalized to a larger population due to smaller data sets, findings can be transferable to another setting.

When working with groups of people, it is important to center their experiences and gather in-depth and accurate understanding of the topics at hand—in this case, racial equity practices in Queen Elizabeth School. Utilizing focus groups/listening circles with structured interview questions allows participants to actively engage in discussions and reflect on nuanced issues such as the issues of racisms and educational injustice, rather than completing quantitative responses that often do not fully capture the breadth of experiences and perceptions.

This research study has a number of limitations. First, this study is limited by its primary focus on the experiences of students, educators, and families who participated in listening circles rather than the outcomes and experiences of all students, educators, and families in the school. Participants are self-selected to participate in the listening circles as the sample was not randomly selected, limiting the ability to generalize findings to the greater population. However, the qualitative data collected offers an in-depth examination of school experiences through the lens of different stakeholders.

> When working with groups of people, it is important to center their experiences and gather in-depth and accurate understanding of the topics.

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[1] Anderson, C. (2010). Presenting and evaluating qualitative research. *American journal of pharmaceutical education, 74*(8).

Another limitation is the potential influence of researchers during the interview process, which **can affect participant responses**. However, R2E facilitators and researchers have extensive experience in conducting listening sessions and focus groups and also participate in ongoing professional development to enhance their skills and to be aware of their positionality during data collection. In addition to circle facilitators, two independent research assistants document the listening circle/interview sessions, taking verbatim notes of what is shared by participants. The transcript of the interview is then analyzed by another researcher to eliminate confirmation bias. Listening circles and centering the voice of those most impacted by racism is one of the most effective ways to capture participants' experiences and perspectives, challenge the status quo and move away from prescriptive ways of doing research, which may be also affected by racism. Qualitative data collection allows more space for participants to openly share and relate with others within the interview process, and is more flexible than structured survey questions and multiple responses, which limit participants. Furthermore, it allows participants to hear their voices throughout the presentation of findings through the use of direct quotes—evidence that their voice matters.

Qualitative data collection allows more space for participants to openly share and relate with others within the interview process.

Appendix A Listening Circle Protocols

Educators

Racing to Equity staff conducted two focus groups with educators from Queen Elizabeth Secondary School. Focus group participants were asked the following questions:

1. What is one thing you are proud of about being a team member of Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
2. Please explain to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Queen Elizabeth Secondary School should focus on advancing educational equity and social justice for each and every student.
3. In what ways are you and your colleagues taking concrete action steps to increase educational justice and racial equity to elevate student achievement for each and every student in Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
4. To what extent do you feel comfortable in discussing the topics of institutional racism, educational justice & racial equity with colleagues and students at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
5. To what extent do you feel competent in addressing and undoing systemic inequities as well as advancing educational justice and racial equity at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
6. In what specific ways can the Queen Elizabeth Secondary School and the Surrey Schools leadership proactively support you and other staff in discussing racial equity and addressing and undoing systemic inequities at your school?
7. What is Queen Elizabeth's strategy to eliminate systemic inequities and to ensure educational excellence? Please explain.
8. To the best of your knowledge, what is the formal process to adequately address grievances related to instances of racism between students and/or systemic inequities?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us that we have not asked you?

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Students

Racing to Equity staff conducted five focus groups with students from Queen Elizabeth Secondary School. Focus group participants were asked the following questions:

1. What is one thing you are proud of about being a student member of Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
2. Please explain to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Queen Elizabeth Secondary School should focus on advancing educational equity and social justice for each and every student.
3. In your own words, how do you feel about being a student at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
4. In your own words, how would you describe the relationship(s) between you and the adults/educators in your school?
5. How are teachers and all staff at your school knowledgeable and respectful of different ethnically and linguistically diverse cultures?
6. How is your home culture(s) and language(s) honoured and respected at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
7. Do you feel comfortable expressing your cultural identity at school? Have you ever felt unsafe when expressing your cultural identity?
8. What can educators (principals, teachers, support staff) do to create safer learning environments that support and value your cultural identity/ies?
9. How do students treat other students who are from different backgrounds and ethnicity at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
10. In your own words, how would you describe the relationship(s) between you and other students in your school?
11. What would you like us to know about that we haven't asked?

Family and Community Members

Racing to Equity staff conducted one focus group with family and community members from Queen Elizabeth Secondary School. Focus group participants were asked the following questions:

1. What is one thing you are proud of about being a family or community member of Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
2. Please explain to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Queen Elizabeth Secondary School should focus on advancing educational equity and social justice for each and every student.
3. From your point of view, are school staff (principals/vice-principals, teachers, support staff) knowledgeable and respectful of ethnically and linguistically diverse cultures? If so, please cite an example.
4. How is your home culture(s) and language(s) honoured and respected at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School?
5. What can educators (principals, teachers, support staff) do to create safe learning environments that support and value your family's cultural identity/ies?
6. How has your school supported you and your child in discussing and addressing your academic goals & dreams? (Family only)
7. In what ways can Queen Elizabeth Secondary School staff work more collaboratively with you to support your child's educational and social emotional success?
8. How can you partner with the District to support the accomplishment of those goals?
9. What would you like us to know about that we haven't asked?

Appendix B
Key Terms

Adapted from Racial Equity Tools and Key Equity Terms & Concepts from the Center for the Study of Social Policy

Anti-racism
Active process of identifying and challenging racism, by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes, to redistribute power in an equitable manner.

Anti-racist
Someone who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing antiracist ideas. This includes the expression of ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing, and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity.

IBPOC
"Black and/or Indigenous People of Color." It is based on the recognition of collective experiences of systemic racism. While "POC" or People of Color is often used as well, IBPOC explicitly leads with Black and Indigenous identities, which helps to counter anti-Black racism and invisibilization of Native communities.   As with any other identity term, it is up to individuals to use this term as an identifier.

Culture
The languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, and collective identities and memories developed by members of all social groups that make their social environments meaningful.

Culturally responsive
Perspectives that promote the belief that one can learn from and respectfully relate to other cultural backgrounds, heritages, and traditions. This requires an awareness of one's own cultural identity and the cultural identities of others. It includes the ability to learn and build on varying cultural and community norms and is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each individual unique, while celebrating the between-group variations.

Discrimination
The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, religion, citizenship status, a combination of those identified, and/or other categories.

Diversity
Socially, it refers to the wide range of identities. It broadly includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. It also involves different ideas, perspectives and values.

Educational justice
The process of reinforcing or establishing policies, practices, curriculum, and pedagogy that produce equitable access, opportunities, treatment, and outcomes for all students, regardless of identity. The educational justice movement recognizes and actively works against the historical and systemic inequities that have unfairly impacted students based on race, ethnicity, culture, linguistic group, socioeconomic status, gender, and ability.

Ethnicity
A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base.

Identity
The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a person is definitively recognized or known. This may include the following aspects: visible (ex: skin color), invisible (ex: religion), personal (ex: values), and social (ex: personality traits). Some characteristics can be manipulated by the individual; others cannot. Individuals hold multiple identities and identities can be fluid.

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Inclusion

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Inequity

The absence of justice; violation of right or of the rights of another

Institutional racism

The practices that perpetuate racial disparities, uphold White supremacy, and serve to the detriment and harm of persons of color and keep them in negative cycles. Institutional/systemic racism also refers to policies that generate different outcomes for persons of different race. These laws, policies, and practices are not necessarily explicit in mentioning any racial group, but work to create advantages for White persons and disadvantages for people of color.

Linguistic

Relating to languages

Race

A social and political construction—with no inherent genetic or biological basis—used by social institutions to arbitrarily categorize and divide groups of individuals based on physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestry, cultural history, and ethnic classification. The concept has been, and still is, used to justify the domination, exploitation, and violence against people who are racialized as non-White.

Racial equity

The proactive process of reinforcing and establishing a set of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all individuals and groups impacted by racism. The goal, however, is not only the eradication of racism, but also the presence of deliberate social systems and structures that sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

Racism

The systematic subjugation of members of targeted racial groups, who hold less socio-political power and/or are racialized as non-White, as means to uphold White supremacy. Racism differs from prejudice, hatred, or discrimination because it requires one racial group to have systematic power and superiority over other groups in society. Often, racism is supported and maintained, both implicitly and explicitly, by institutional structures and policies, cultural norms and values, and individual behaviors.

Social justice

A process, not an outcome, which **(1)** seeks fair (re)distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; **(2)** challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; **(3)** empowers all people to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential; **(4)** and builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action.

Systemic inequity

An interlocking and reciprocal relationship between the individual, institutional and structural levels which function as a system of racism. These various levels of racism operate together in a lockstep model and function together as a whole system. These levels are:
Individual (within interactions between people)
Institutional (within institutions and systems of power)
Structural or societal (among institutions and across society)

They include the historical, social, political, institutional, and cultural factors that contribute to, legitimize, and maintain racial inequities. Systemic racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice, it is the confluence of racist concepts and theories that control our economic, political, and social systems.

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