

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 27, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Presentation By Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations  
(NAARR)

ORIGINATOR: E. Schmidt, Executive Director

RESOURCE

STAFF: Anne Sherwood

INFORMATION

Ms Charlene Hay, Executive Director Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR), has requested an opportunity to make a presentation to the board as a followup to their May 11, 2004 presentation to board to describe the work that has been done with the district since then and to present a short list of recommendations.

Arrangements have been made for Ms Hay to make her presentation to the board on **Tuesday, September 27, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.** She will be accompanied by Dr. Jennifer Kelly.

Ms Hay has provided the attached information in advance of the board meeting with respect to her presentation (Attachment #1).

AS:mmf

Attachment #1 – Material Provided by the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations

**Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR)**  
**Edmonton Public School Board Presentation**  
**September 27, 2005**

**Purpose:** To follow up on our initial board presentation of May 11, 2004. We wish to describe the work of the *Action Group for Racial Equity in Education (AGREE)* which is a community based group that was set up to follow up on the findings in our report *Equity in Edmonton Schools*. To conclude, we will present some commendations and recommendations with regard to what we see as the next steps in the process of increasing equity in Edmonton public schools.

**Presentation:**

The Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR) presented results of our *Equity in Edmonton Schools* research and recommendations to you, the Edmonton Public School Board of Trustees, on May 11 of 2004.

Since April of 2004, NAARR set up and coordinated meetings of a committee that was named *Action Group for Racial Equity in Education (AGREE – Public)*. Similar committees worked concurrently with Edmonton Catholic Schools and the Conseil Scolaire Centre Nord (the Francophone district in this region). The groups have broad community representation: parents, representatives of organizations whose members are affected by racial inequities in schools, University of Alberta faculty, the Alberta Teachers' Association, teachers, and other concerned individuals.

This group met monthly over a period of 15 months where we engaged in dialogue about the concerns brought out by our *Equity in Edmonton Schools* research and educational concerns brought by committee members. We are grateful for the presence of Ms. Karen Bardy who represented your district at these meetings. Out of the original list of recommendations presented to you, AGREE identified 4 top priorities. They are, in order:

1. Provision of professional development to all teachers
2. Development of a comprehensive policy to address these concerns
3. Development of clearly equitable hiring practices
4. Development of a protocol for dealing with racial incidents in schools

**Commendations:**

Some of our concerns will be addressed by ongoing changes within the EPSB and we commend Edmonton Public Schools for the following:

**1. The board priority of Cultural Diversity**

We understand that each school must address the issue of cultural diversity and report back on how this was undertaken. This highlighting of cultural diversity is welcomed but we would like to caution, with regard to our own specific concerns of racism, that highlighting culture does not necessarily address racism and that culture can be addressed without looking at the realities of racism.

## **2. Superb Results for ALL Students**

We are confident that policy and procedures that increase understanding of racism and intercultural communication help to ensure that the human rights of all students are respected and that this will certainly be reflected in increased achievement for racialized minorities.

## **3. On-line Aboriginal Resources**

Which is an excellent collection of teacher and student resources that pre-service and in-service teachers can access.

## **4. Reception Centre for Immigrants**

Potentially a very useful framework for working with immigrant students but we would also urge caution with regard to the length of placement and to potential bias in evaluation and testing of students for these centers.

## **5. Educational sessions being offered to school personnel on Aboriginal, Intercultural, and Anti-racism Education**

## **6. Committing to continue working with the community through the “district advisory group.”** This is an excellent idea that builds on NAARR’s efforts with the AGREE group to link community, school system administrators, teachers and university faculty.

## **7. Senior administration willing to work on this with us**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **1. Professional development in Aboriginal, Intercultural, and Anti-racism education:**

- be provided to schools at **no charge**. We recognize that there is currently no charge for Aboriginal and Intercultural education (when it involves English Language Learners). We submit that racism affects individuals outside of these 2 groups.
- there be incentives and/or requirements for school staff to participate in these educational sessions e.g., points for taking such a course and a preference for hiring candidates who have taken such courses in university.

Offering the sessions is an excellent step and the next step is to ensure that all teachers have the necessary tools to teach and discipline all students equitably and to recognize and deal with racism effectively.

**2. Develop a broadly comprehensive policy including the following areas: curriculum, counseling, parent/community communication, assessment, student conduct, employment equity, and professional development**

AGREE submits that while Edmonton Public Schools has some good policies in place, it is necessary to highlight the issues in one comprehensive policy as many districts across Canada have done. We submit a sample policy that our committee has created, that addresses all areas of concern. We believe this is necessary so that parents may feel confident that this district will protect the legal rights of their children, and so that school personnel can be familiar with all aspects of this issue.

We understand that your district hires based on merit. We submit that using employment equity supports this premise and works to ensure that all candidates are interviewed and assessed equitably. The federal government, and many provincial governments, municipalities and school districts have instituted such policies.

**We conclude** by stating that providing more equitable schooling has economic advantages – for society by reducing costs associated with welfare, health, crime and justice – and for the district by attracting visible minority and Aboriginal students. These groups currently comprise 20% of Edmonton’s population<sup>1</sup>, a percentage that will continue to grow. We submit in the form of a chart the economic costs and benefits of diversity, commonly used by large corporations to maximize their earning potential, which has been adapted to reflect costs and benefits to schools.

We thank you for working with AGREE and the community and for hearing us as their representatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Census Canada, 1996

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Diversity (adapted from *Diversity: A Business Advantage*, Phebe-Jane Poole, Ajax Ontario, Pool Publishing Ltd. 1997)

COSTS	BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- time to develop diversity process</li> <li>- time and resources to implement process</li> <li>- communicating diversity information</li> <li>- conducting education programs</li> <li>- monitoring diversity process</li> <li>- preparing reports</li> <li>- reporting to senior management and union</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increased employee (student &amp; staff) morale and satisfaction</li> <li>- decreased turnover (of all employees, students)</li> <li>- decreased absenteeism (of employees, students)</li> <li>- increased productivity (of employees, students)</li> <li>- increased effectiveness of teams (schools)</li> <li>- decreased <b>legal costs</b> for grievances and human rights complaints</li> <li>- enhanced organization reputation with prospective employees, clients, and investors (&amp;students)</li> <li>- improved customer service (education)</li> <li>- increased customer (student &amp; staff) satisfaction loyalty, retention and growth</li> <li>- <b>INCREASED LONG-RUN PROFITABILITY (success) AND FINANCIAL HEALTH</b></li> </ul>

**Equity Policy DRAFT**  
**Action Group for Racial Equity in Education**  
**For Edmonton Public Schools**

**A. RATIONALE**

**Support and endorse legislation**

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

Charter of Rights and Freedoms – “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability”.

Alberta Human Rights legislation prohibits discrimination in services and employment  
School Act

“Principals of antiracism and ethnocultural equity shall permeate and be manifest in all aspects of the board’s organizational structure, including its mission statement and strategic plan, and all areas of the board’s operations, policies, procedures, guidelines, programs and practices.” (Lakehead antiracism and ethnocultural equity policy)

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes the growing diversity of our students, staff, and community and will acknowledge and address the systemic nature of racism, and the systemic barriers and inequities that exist.

EPS will provide human, material, and financial resources by creating and supporting learning activities for staff, students, trustees, volunteers, administrators, or “any person directly or indirectly associated with educational programs or business” (Vancouver Island North)

These resources will be used to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the area of racial and cultural diversity, by affirming, the diversity of our students and staff. Diversity enriches and strengthens our school system.

EPS recognizes that racial prejudice and discrimination exist in society and therefore in all institutions, including this school system. Racism can be subtle or overt, and intentional or unintentional.

Racism in our system must be eliminated; we will work to this end and deal constructively with it. Reasons for this are the threats on individual liberty, civil well-being of each student, diminishing economic productivity of students, and intellectual depth and diversity. Our goal is racial harmony.

These principles will be, wherever appropriate, integrated into all policies and practices of EPS.

These principles will be implemented and revised using 3 year plans.

## **B. CURRICULUM**

EPS will examine and reduce the ethnocultural bias of curriculum by collecting, promoting, and making available learning resources in all curriculum areas that

- acknowledge the contribution of all racial groups
- encourage pride, self esteem in one's own heritage and first language and a respect for other cultures
- develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes in students, with the goal of eliminating racism
- help students deal with racism constructively when they see it and
- teach them to value diversity.

EPS will not purchase or use, material with racial or cultural prejudice and will review curriculum materials for this purpose. Any material containing such prejudice will be reported to the Superintendent.

## **C. COUNSELLING**

EPS views counselling as having an important role in dismantling discrimination and providing proactive strategies to assist racial and cultural minority students to reach their full potential and meet their career goals.

All counselling will be culturally sensitive and free of racial and cultural bias.



#### **D. PARENT, COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION**

EPS will work toward open, constructive dialogue between parent, school, and community. Translation services will be offered wherever possible to improve this communication. The cultural community will be informed of this policy and encouraged to participate in actions.

Each school will develop a strategy to improve this communication.

#### **E. ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT**

Assessment and placement must be based on bona fide educational needs and abilities. There will be no discrimination in these processes

Parents who suspect bias have right to appeal to principal and superintendent.

## **F. CONDUCT**

Racial incidents among students must be addressed. All staff must immediately intervene, can not ignore or refuse to investigate these situations. Staff must be sensitive to the issues involved, deal with these incidents constructively, and may make use of any learning opportunity presented.

All attempts will be made to resolve the issues at the school or department level unless recipient feels uncomfortable or threatened in any way by doing so. Any recipient report will be confidential, will NOT appear in their personal record, and the recipient must be informed of the resolution. Counselling will be available to recipient.

Principals will inform the complainants of this policy.

If resolution is not satisfactory, the issue will be taken to the superintendent.

If it remains unsatisfactory, it will be taken to a committee with an ATA representative, an administrator, and a resource person. If mediator used – must be acceptable to both parties.

The Superintendent must then report the incident to the board.

Each school must inform all students, parents, staff, etc. of the policy and include it in their code of conduct.

Before implementing any mandatory suspension, mitigating circumstances must be considered.

## **G. PERSONNEL/EMPLOYMENT EQUITY**

The goal of EPS is to enhance the possibility of developing a work force that is broadly representative of racial and ethnic diversity in the community. It is important to provide positive role models at all levels (for students and staff).

EPS is committed to providing fair and equal access to employment and promotion by all races and cultures. Discriminatory hiring practices will be identified and removed. This will require self-identification of racial/ethnic background by employees.

Hiring and promotion will be based on bona fide qualifications and experience, based on merit consistent with the Human Rights Code (NOT arbitrary, inflexible quotas).

Sensitivity to human rights and cultural sensitivity is crucial in selection and promotion. Professional development in this area is necessary for all human resources personnel.

Recruitment will be encouraged (as widely as appropriate) among all racial and cultural minority groups at all levels.

Annual statistics will be kept of people from racial and cultural minority with their years of service, age, salary level, numbers applying, appointed, hired, or promoted.

## **H. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

EPS will proactively promote professional development (especially for all new hires and in all principal training) for teachers, administrators, trustees and others to increase knowledge, sensitivity, and skills on how to relate well with racial and cultural minorities.

Information will be shared about ethnic & race relations, religious differences, biased materials, and how to build racial harmony.