		<b>Commission scolaire English-Montréal</b> <b>English Montreal School Board</b>
<b>POLICY:</b>	<b>RACIAL INCIDENTS</b>	<b>CODE: CS-8</b>
<b>Origin:</b>	Community Services Department	
<b>Authority:</b>	Resolutions #88-09-08-2; #92-01-29-6.3	
<b>Reference(s):</b>		

## PREAMBLE

One major reality of the Board's race relations work is that a policy cannot be made effective simply by stating it. There is a need for continuing action and a need to develop tools for dealing with situations as they evolve. To stand still in race relations work is to drift slowly backwards.

As a result of the rapid change in the cultural and racial composition of the Board's clientele, a change which accentuated the visibility factor and increased the level of racism in our school community, the School Board moved towards a multicultural/multiracial or anti-racist approach to education in its schools.

As educators, we can play a primary role in building a more just society by teaching and living the principles of tolerance and openness to everyone. We also have a more immediate role to play: we must challenge racism wherever we find it in our working environment. We have no choice in this matter - the Board requires it of us in a policy which is consistent with an extensive body of law designed to combat racism in Canadian society.

Racial incidents are occurring in our system. We must be sure that we recognize them and deal with them. Students and staff need to know how to recognize racism - in all its forms - in educational settings. In particular, students must be reassured that staff are prepared to deal with racial incidents, and they will react firmly, consistently and equitably, at all times.

This policy was developed to assist in the implementation of the concepts inherent in the School Board's policy on multicultural/multiracial education.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**


The English Montreal School Board is committed to the following general principles regarding multicultural/multiracial education services:

1. The Board reaffirms and promotes the dignity and fundamental worth of all human beings regardless of racial, religious or socio-cultural background.
2. The school environment should provide each student with an equal opportunity for individual academic success and personal development.
3. It is the responsibility of the school system to provide such opportunities so that students may learn the attitudes and skills that will enable them to succeed and to participate as fully as possible in the larger Quebec and Canadian societies.

## **POLICY**

The English Montreal School Board shall condemn and refuse to tolerate any practice or expression of disrespect involving racial or ethnic discrimination in any form by its commissioners, administrators, staff or students.

Senior administrators, department administrators and school principals shall make it clear to their staff and students that exchanges of any kind involving racially or ethnically derogatory terms are not acceptable under any circumstances and will not be tolerated.

		<b>Commission scolaire English-Montréal</b> <b>English Montreal School Board</b>
<b>PROCEDURE:</b>	<b>RACIAL INCIDENTS</b>	<b>CODE: CS-8.P</b>
<b>Origin:</b>	Community Services Department	
<b>Reference(s):</b>	EMSB Policy & Procedures on <i>Sensitive Interpersonal Situations</i> (HR-10)	

## PURPOSE

To provide procedures when dealing with incidents of a specifically racist nature.

This should be considered as supplementary to the procedures for Sensitive Interpersonal Situations and for use in specifically racial incidents.

Both procedures are designed to ensure a proper, judicious investigation, respectful of the rights of accuser and accused as well as of the entire community.

## PREAMBLE

This Board has adopted policies designed to address the ethnic imbalance in the composition of its workforce and to create a review mechanism to counter bias in texts and teaching materials. Nevertheless, these very important elements of systemic racism exist and can themselves create tension in our schools. All concerned should be aware of these and other such underlying potential causes of racial incidents.

Whether racial incidents in EMSB schools occur deliberately or unconsciously, as a result of insensitivity, or in jest, such incidents are forms of harassment which cause hurt, humiliation, shame and anger. They are psychologically destructive and socially disruptive. Such incidents cannot be accepted by a school system that seeks to promote multicultural/multiracial education, and seeks to ensure an equal educational opportunity for all its students.

*It should be understood that failure to respond to racial incidents cannot be considered a "neutral" reaction, but rather, its effect is to condone prejudicial and racist behaviour in our schools.*

The goal for EMSB race relations policies is a school system that nurtures positive human interactions, free from divisions based on race, gender, colour, religion, or national origin. It is also the provision of as equitable educational opportunities as possible.

The EMSB must take a leadership role in the movement to eradicate racism from society.

## DEFINITIONS OF RACISM (from Task Force Glossary)

1. **Racism:** Key components include: ethnocentrism, prejudice, stereotypes, social distance, and forms of discrimination; also refers to: a set of implicit or explicit beliefs, assumptions and actions based upon an ideology of inherent superiority of one racial or ethnic group over another and evident within individual thought or behaviour patterns.
2. **Individual Racism:** a form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious, personal prejudice.
3. **Systemic Racism:** a general employment condition, specific practice, or approach to hiring or promotion that applies equally to everyone at a workplace but that negatively affects employment opportunity or advancement for specific groups of people. Systemic racism manifests itself in two ways:
  - a. *Institutional Racism:* racial discrimination that derives from individuals carrying out the dictates of others who are prejudiced or of a prejudiced society;
  - b. *Structural Racism:* inequalities rooted in the system-wide operation of a society which excludes substantial numbers of members of particular ethnic categories from significant participation in its major social institutions.

## DEFINITIONS OF RACIAL INCIDENTS

Racial incidents are verbal, written or physical interactions or exchanges between or among students; between or among staff; and between or among staff and students and/or parents that express derogatory attitudes towards, or hate for, a person or a particular group based on race, colour, culture or nationality.

Racial incidents may take the form of name-calling, slurs, insults, intimidation, physical assault, or outright violence. Other manifestations of racial hostility which are just as pernicious are: racial jokes, written racial insults, teasing, graffiti, avoidance behaviour, and low expectations for minority people.

A racial incident may also be a reaction directly or indirectly associated with a systemic bias in the school system. (See Definitions of Racism, above).

The following is a suggested list of the various types of racial incidents:

1. **Verbal abuse** - Ranging from teasing and racial "jokes" to slurs, insults and general name-calling. These can be intentionally offensive or not and isolated or persistent.
2. **Graffiti** - These can range from insulting words to offensive signs (swastikas, etc.). This anonymous form of insult is more than it may seem to be, since its presence constitutes an insidious encouragement for some, an intolerable provocation for others and a degradation in the atmosphere of the school. All graffiti must be removed at once.
3. **Abuse of Personal Property** - There is also a range of significance here since many young children habitually throw each other's schoolbags around for no particular reason. This cannot be condoned, but it is important to distinguish between excessive high spirits and vindictive attacks.
4. **Physical Assault and Violence** - It is important to distinguish between violence which incidentally involves different racial groups and violence based on racial antipathy. We cannot condone any sort of violence, but a further distinction should be made between isolated temper tantrums and deliberate intent to hurt. Age and respective physical strengths must also be a consideration. The numbers involved are an important factor, particularly when groups of one race attack single members of another race. Staff should always be on the lookout for evidence of organized racial bullying or extortion.
5. **Avoidance Behaviour** - There is a whole spectrum of 'avoidance behaviour' (e.g. refusal to sit next to or work with children of another racial group), which is symptomatic of previously learned or acquired prejudices. All such behaviour should be questioned and every attempt should be made, by example as well as precept, to discourage such behaviour. If necessary, a non-accusatory interview with parents might be tried. (It may be that the parents have consciously or unconsciously inspired this behaviour.) Cooperative learning techniques in class-work can help break down children's preconceived views. This is not primarily an area for discipline but is more appropriately handled by friendly persuasion and by classroom discussion of human rights and the implications of the Charter.
6. **Racist Propaganda** - The more coherent forms of graffiti fall under this heading, as does the increasing amount of literature emanating from outside adult sources (Aryan Nation, etc.). Despite the apparent dilemma involved of freedom of speech versus an anti-racist policy, it must be understood that the most liberal society cannot permit the dissemination of literature containing racial slurs or inspired by hatred or contempt for any racial or religious group. We must oppose any expression, oral or written, of racism. Again, the appropriate sanction in such cases depends on whether it is an isolated incident or a persistent campaign. If the propaganda contains arguments or alleged facts, these can be countered in discussion, but the propaganda cannot be allowed to circulate, since it can only increase tension and provoke further incidents.

## PROCEDURE

ALL INVESTIGATIONS ARE TO BE CONDUCTED IN A CONFIDENTIAL MANNER BY ALL CONCERNED AND SHOULD BE DEALT WITH AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE.

### 1. Recognition of the Need for Support Services

In applying the specific procedures the parties involved may need the assistance of support services. Some examples of such assistance are:

- a. The investigator may seek the advice of his or her association representative, of another colleague, or of his or her immediate superior.
- b. It may be appropriate to consult with guidance counselors and social workers.
- c. Each school should consider setting up, on an ad hoc basis, small support teams to counsel the victims and, where applicable, the perpetrators of a racial incident. The composition of this team may vary according to circumstances but, where children are involved, should include persons close to the children.

### 2. General Procedures

- a. All procedures must be in conformity with Board policy and must be acceptable to the community *in advance* of their implementation, to reduce the possibility of recriminations and misunderstandings.
- b. The overriding object of all procedures must be to avoid incidents as much as possible, to establish clear sanctions appropriate to the gravity of the incident and to reduce tensions by encouraging honest discussion of the underlying problem.
- c. In order to ensure maximum acceptance and understanding of the whole problem of poor interaction between groups based on racial prejudice and hostility, it is essential that each school communicate to its community (parents, staff, students) on an annual basis the Board policy on racial incidents, the general principles underlying the policy and the recommended procedures.
- d. Administrators and teachers should constantly review material used in their school for possible bias or offensive stereotyping to avoid creating incidents in the classroom. Such material should be recommended for withdrawal to the Regional Director.

- e. All members of the EMSB community shall regularly review policies and practices in order to identify systemic bias that may result in racial incidents. Consistent with Board policy, all steps must be taken by the appropriate bodies or individuals to ensure that such biases, once identified, are removed from the system.

### 3. Specific Procedures

- a. It is the responsibility of *any adult* to attempt, where practical, to put an end to the incident and to intervene in support of Board or school anti-racist policy. Teachers should utilize the incident as a learning experience for all concerned, again with due regard for confidentiality.
- b. The ultimate object of any intervention is to reduce the likelihood of any recurrence by fostering healthy, honest and respectful attitudes towards people of different ethnocultural backgrounds.
- c. All reports must be investigated, in a non-accusatory way, by going directly to the alleged participants. Only when a *prima facie* (at first sight) case has been satisfactorily made should any further action be contemplated. In cases of doubt, the entire case should be reported to the principal.
- d. A clear distinction must be made between allegations and facts, between incidents which are reported and those which are actually witnessed. A further distinction must be made, after due consideration, between trivial incidents and significant incidents which no healthy, respectful community can ignore.
- e. If there is substance to the complaint and if, in the best judgment of the investigator, the incident is significant, it should be reported to the principal. Should the principal be the object of a complaint, the incident should be reported to the Regional Director.
- f. All cases witnessed by or reported to the principal should be investigated fully, bearing in mind the presumption of innocence as well as the need to clearly identify racist behaviour, to take sensible, judicious measures to correct them and to prevent their recurrence.
- g. It is understood that, should a meeting between the parties concerned be deemed necessary, each party shall have the right to be accompanied by someone of his or her choice and that there shall be at least one Board representative, other than the investigator, present. At such meetings involving students, the parents shall also have the automatic right to attend.

- h. Any alleged racist incident or any alleged incident involving violence or vandalism which, in the principal's view is (a) *substantiated* and (b) *serious or insoluble at the school level*, must be recorded in writing on the appropriate form, (See "Racial Incidents Report", Appendix A), and sent at once to the Regional Director for automatic referral to an ad hoc committee. This committee shall be composed of:
- i. The Director of Student Services
  - ii. The Principal concerned
  - iii. The Regional Director concerned
  - iv. A neutral Principal
  - v. The Director of Community Services or his representative

*N.B. It is understood that in any case involving accusations against employees, these persons have the right at any point in the investigation to consult with, and be represented by their appropriate union or association.*

- i. Should there be failure to arrive at an acceptable resolution between or among the parties involved, or the incident is serious enough, parents or guardians *must* be involved. If the parties are 18 years or older, the parents or guardians *may* be involved.
- j. Should section i. above not be effective or should there be a similar recurrence, it then becomes the responsibility of the principal to apply appropriate disciplinary measures.
- k. **Disciplinary measures and sanctions**

Each school should formulate an agreed disciplinary procedure, appropriate to its community, within the framework of Board policy. It is important that this policy be clearly understood by the entire school community and form an integral part of the school code of behaviour and discipline policy.

Following is a list of possible sanctions which are graded according to the gravity of the offence. It is important to underline the necessity for all concerned to evaluate each offence in the light of Board and school policy and to be ever conscious of the danger of subjective value judgments which cannot be defended subsequently:

- i. *Staff:*
  - As per collective agreements.



- ii. *Students:*
  - Expressions of disapproval and attempts to dissuade children by honest discussion
  - Informal discussions with parents
  - Referral to principal for further discussion
  - Referral to principal for punishment
  - Formal interviews with parents
  - Suspension
  - Transfer
  - Expulsion (by Board resolution)
- I. Racism is not the individual concern of certain members of staff. It is the concern of all staff members in a school.

It is ineffective if disciplinary measures are utilized by some members of staff and not others. *A whole-school approach must be adopted.*

Clear explanations of behaviour which is unacceptable to the school, and how such behaviour will be dealt with, must be established and communicated to the entire school community.

School principals must ensure that intervention procedures and the school's disciplinary code relative to racial incidents are applied *by all staff members equally.*

- m. Each school adopts its own method for communicating policies and procedures regarding racial incidents.
- n. The Board shall endeavour to provide the in-service training necessary to enable staff to acquire the necessary understanding and skills in this area.
- o. It must be clearly understood that any employee guilty of perpetrating a racial incident is subject to the full sanction of disciplinary procedures.
- p. Alleged racial incidents by non-EMSB employees working for the EMSB must be reported to the appropriate Director for possible action. (This procedure also applies to volunteers who may be serving in our school system.)
- q. In such cases, the incident must be referred immediately to the Regional Director for appropriate action on the appropriate form. (Appendix A)

**APPENDIX A**



**Commission scolaire English-Montréal**  
**English Montreal School Board**

**RACIAL INCIDENTS REPORT**

To be completed by the Principal and forwarded to the Regional Director with one copy to Community Services Department. (Please see “Specific Procedures”). Always attach copies of relevant documents to this report.

**Name of School:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Nature of incident (please refer to guidelines) and brief description:

2. Steps taken (please see guidelines):

3. Further recommendations, if applicable:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

- Note:**
1. Always verify accuracy of all complaints – first-hand evidence is best.
  2. Except in violent cases, first attempt to mediate between parties as soon as possible.