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## An Issue of Equity and Inclusion: Disproportionate Suspension and Expulsion Rates of Black and Indigenous students

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## **Abstract**

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is based on a problem of practice (PoP) in the Laoshi District School Board (LDSB), a central Ontario public school board, that champions equity and inclusion. Despite the emphasis on these values, the LDSB is witnessing disproportionately high suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students. This PoP, when viewed through the anti-oppressive (AO) and critical race theoretical frameworks (CRT), is a problem of social justice and equity. This work is undertaken in a time of growing societal awareness of the issues faced by marginalized and vulnerable communities. This OIP examines the impact of progressive discipline practice, neoliberalism, and continued existence of colonialist ideology on Black and Indigenous students as causes of the exclusionary discipline practices. As such, a transformative leadership approach, rooted in addressing and correcting societal inequities, has been utilized. An adapted version of The Change Path Model: Cawsey-Descza-Ingols (CPM) and the Nadler-Tushman Congruence Model (NTC) are employed in this OIP to undertake the proposed solution of incorporating trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices within the school board. This OIP proposes the use of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices to lower the suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students and address one of the current inequities faced by these students.

*Keywords:* trauma-sensitive, restorative justice, transformative leadership, anti-oppressive theoretical framework, critical race theoretical framework, social justice, neoliberalism, progressive discipline

## **Executive Summary**

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is written to address the problem of the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students in the Laoshi District School Board (LDSB). Transformational leadership, as reflected in the LDSB board mission and values, is in direct conflict with the ideals of neoliberalism which permeate Ontario's educational policies and practices. The Problem of Practice (PoP), the disproportionate suspension and expulsion of Black and Indigenous students, is a reality which the LDSB is grappling to address. Within the last year, the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter Movement have led to an awakening of racial inequity within the LDSB (Bowden, 2020; Pellow, 2016; Rajendra et al., 2020; SMHO, 2020). As such, the board is now looking for ways to address the racial inequity experienced by these marginalized students. This PoP arises from the entrenchment of White privilege and neoliberal ideology which exist in our educational system, policies, and practices (Apple, 2017; Anthym & Tuit, 2019; Kumoshiro, 2000; Levinsky, 2016; Martino & Rezai-Rashit, 2012; Mayor, 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Sue et al., 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). As this PoP is an issue of social justice, the PoP is addressed within this OIP using a transformative leadership approach. Both the critical race theoretical framework (CRT) and the anti-oppressive theoretical framework (AO) are used to gain an understanding of the causes of the PoP and the problematic application of the progressive discipline model currently in use. Significantly, a discussion is undertaken early in this OIP of how I, as a middle-class White woman who is not part of the communities being discussed, will utilize positionality and reflexivity to ensure that this OIP remains true to the assertion that marginalized community voices must be included when discussing issues affecting their communities.

Shields' (2018) eight tenets of transformative leadership complement and provide depth to the CRT and AO Frameworks and guide the selection of change models, the development of the change initiative, and the choice of solution. Three different change models are discussed resulting in the selection of The Change Path Model: Cawsey-Descza-Ingols (CPM) (Cawsey et al., 2016). The flaws in this model, for the purposes of the OIP, are mitigated by the introduction of the Nadler-Tushman Congruence Model (NTC) as a means of analyzing the PoP within the LDSB in order to determine what needs to change (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Three different solutions to the PoP are proposed. The first being an introduction of anti-racist workshops to school administrators. The second being school administrator workshops on bias-free progressive discipline. The chosen solution, the third alternative, is a series of school administrator workshops on trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices. The implementation of these new practices using the chosen CPM, and the NTC for organizational analysis purposes, will be applied using leadership ethics entrenched in Shields' (2018) transformative tenets which acknowledge the ethical nature of the social justice orientation of the PoP.

The use of CPM assigns different actions at the four different stages of the model in order to implement trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices in the LDSB. The use of Shields' (2018) transformative tenets, the CRT, and the AO are utilized within this OIP to develop a plan for how resistance to change will be approached and how different strategies will be pivoted to as adjustments are made necessary during the change process. Secondly, a monitoring and evaluation plan for each stage is laid out based upon monitoring and evaluating questions created for the successful implementation of the change initiative. The change process will be monitored and evaluated by the Trauma-Sensitive Schools Change Committee (TSSCC) and its

subcommittees. Thirdly, the communication plan at each stage of the CPM will be aligned with Cawsey et al.'s (2016) four-phase Communication Model. Each stage of the CPM will have a different focus on communication. This OIP concludes with next steps and future considerations to address this PoP, implement the recommendations in this OIP, and address the current inequities within the LDSB.

## **Acknowledgements**

This has been the most challenging three years of my life. I have so many people I want to thank for enabling me to go on this journey. The continual support of my professors and colleagues drove me to challenge my assumptions and ideas resulting in an OIP of which I am proud. The never-ending encouragement and support of my friends gave me the strength to continue on this journey when I wanted to stop.

To my mother, you taught me kindness and empathy. This has made me a better human being and significantly impacted my choice of this project. You have always pushed me to achieve my maximum potential. Thank you.

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## **Acronyms**

AO (anti-oppressive theoretical framework)

ARD (Anti-Racism Directorate)

CPM (The Change Path Model: Cawsey-Deszca-Ingols)

CRT (critical race theoretical framework)

LDSB (Laoshi District School Board)

NTC (Nadler & Tushman Congruence Model)

OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)

PoP (Problem of Practice)

SES (socio-economic status)

TSSCC (Trauma-Sensitive Schools Change Committee)

## Glossary

**Anti-oppressive theoretical framework:** A social work theoretical framework arguing for the need to counteract oppressive systems and practices (Kumashiro, 2000; Sewell, 2016)

**Critical race theoretical framework:** A theoretical framework arguing that racism is entrenched in societal institutions, policies, and practices (Vaught & Castagno, 2008)

**Neoliberalism:** A political ideology which prioritizes economic growth (Apple, 2017; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012)

**Reflexivity:** A practice of self-reflection meant to uncover how an individual constructs their reality and knowledge within their lived experience (Finlay, 2016)

**Transformative leadership:** A leadership philosophy rooted in a social justice activist agenda (Shields, 2018)



## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem**

This chapter will discuss the history and structure of the Laoshi District School Board (LDSB), my leadership position and problem of practice (PoP), guiding questions emerging from the problem, the leadership-focused vision of change, and organizational change readiness. The Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) focuses on addressing the inequitable learning environment for Black and Indigenous students due to exclusionary discipline policies which are at odds with LDSB's vision and mission (Board Website, 2021; Sefa Dei, 2008). By raising awareness of the systemic oppression and marginalization of Black and Indigenous students, through purposeful and authentic communication, LDSB stakeholders will understand and support the ethical reasons for change with respect to the use of discipline (Cawsey et al., 2016; Kumashiro, 2000; Theoharis, 2007).

### **Organizational Context**

The Laoshi District School Board ([LDSB] anonymized for the purpose of the organizational improvement plan), is a central Ontario school board covering an area of more than 200 square kilometres with over 160 elementary and secondary schools. The student population is composed of a diverse range of ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds from a mixture of urban, suburban, and rural communities (Board Website, 2021). The staff of the LDSB is not reflective of the student population as 89% of the staff identify as White with 1% identifying as Black and less than 1% identifying as Indigenous (Board Document, 2019). The transformational leadership within the LDSB is witnessed by efforts to raise LDSB educators' levels of consciousness surrounding the higher-level needs of the communities they serve (Bass, 1985; Board Website, 2021). The LDSB vision, rooted in ethical leadership, emphasizes community, diversity, and inclusion (Board Website, 2021; Northouse, 2019). When coupled

with the high expectations of the LDSB mission of building all students for the future, grounded in authentic leadership and transparent communication amongst all stakeholders, the transformational leadership approaches of the LDSB are evident (Abbasi, 2017; Board Website, 2021; Northouse, 2019). Thus, the LDSB's mission and vision are representative of their commitment to equity and inclusion. The transformational leadership in the LDSB is witnessed by recent changes in discipline policies and procedures which embrace the transformational goals of changing processes "by setting directions, developing people, [and] redesigning the organization" (Shields, 2010, p. 563). These transformational goals allow for the introduction of transformative leadership tenets which would expand the LDSB goals to the "deconstruction and reconstruction of social/cultural knowledge frameworks that generate inequity" (Shields, 2010, p. 563).

Recent political events have brought to light societal inequalities based upon race and are causing a racial reckoning in our society. The current political movement, Black Lives Matter, paired with the disproportionate percentage of COVID-19 deaths in marginalized communities are change drivers for raising awareness of racial inequity in our society (Bowden, 2020; Pellow, 2016; Rajendra et al., 2020; SMHO, 2020). This new awareness is creating a crisis in the LDSB with regard to systemic racism. As balancing both private and public good can be accomplished by challenging the status quo and institutions of privilege (Shields, 2010), the need to re-examine current educational structures and processes has been brought to light in the LDSB.

While a significant LDSB goal is to create an inclusive and equitable environment for all students to learn and succeed, the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students, acknowledged by the LDSB Director, is creating an exclusionary and inequitable learning environment for Black and Indigenous students (Board Email, 2020;

Gregory et al., 2017; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017; Rivers, 2020; Wotherspoon, 2014). This is due, in large part, to a lack of awareness of systemic racism and traumatic responses amongst the majority of the LDSB staff and is problematic in attaining the LDSB's vision, mission, and commitments (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Levinsky, 2016). The recent appointment of a Superintendent of Equity acknowledges that addressing systemic issues within our educational systems and processes is a key priority of the board (Rivers, 2021). Indeed, a recent news release by our Superintendent of Equity stated that "Equity and diversity are now key strategic priorities in our planning" and that the board has decided "to dismantle the systemic barriers" (Rivers, 2021). This, again, shows that the LDSB's transformational leadership goals are open to the transformative tenets of seeking "deep and equitable change" (Shields, 2010, p. 563).

Despite their commitment to equity and inclusion, the LDSB functions under the auspices of the Ontario Ministry of Education, at the direction of the Ontario government, and faces a crisis in competing philosophies. The PoP, high suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students, has developed from the continued existence of colonial attitudes reinforced by neoliberal policies in education (Wotherspoon, 2014). The LDSB is grappling with two major problems with respect to addressing the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students. The first being the neoliberal emphasis on testing which is creating an issue with racial data collection (Gorski, 2016b; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). The second being the application of progressive discipline practice which fails to acknowledge the existence of adaptive responses to trauma and advantages students from White and middle-class homes (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Levinsky, 2016; Livingston & Weinfeld, 2017; Milne & Aurini,



2015). A brief discussion of these two problems will be conducted here but explored more throughout this OIP.

### **LDSB Challenges Caused by Neoliberalism**

The rightist agenda of the Ontario Ministry of Education, based in neoliberal ideology, emphasizes market influences and individual competition over a community centered approach prioritizing the collective good (Apple, 2017; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Green, 2016; Hursh & Martina, 2016). While neoliberalism provides the illusion that it improves people's lives, it actually disregards collective responsibility (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Neoliberalism has resulted in increased accountability incorporating performance goals, such as the emphasis on standardized test scores and data collection focusing on underachievement and addressing the achievement gap (Apple, 2017; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). Between 1993 and 2009, the concept of equity in Ontario policy has shifted from focus on the traditionally marginalized to gender-based underachievement, without any consideration of socio-economic class, visible minority status, or geographic location (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). Hence, the new focus on data prioritized by the neoliberal Ontario government agenda has resulted in the concept of equity being morphed into a vehicle to raise market competitiveness (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). This is reflected in the concept of equity erasing race and social class in data collection reinforcing inequitable educational policies and systems as a result of having no race-based data for analysis (Apple, 2017; Codjoe, 2001; Davies & Bansel, 2007; George et al., 2020; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). Additionally, the current equity policy transfers responsibility from governmental apparatuses and institutions to individuals by removing the discussion of race and class as systemic barriers to achievement (Gorski, 2016b; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). Gorski (2016a) argues that it is an "indefensible premise that we can *achieve* equity by *ignoring* equity" (p. 222).

Hence, there is a call to acknowledge, address, and support efforts rooted in the principles of equity and justice (Gorski, 2016a). Mayor (2018) connects the efforts of neoliberalism with forces of governmentality and whiteness arguing that the results of these policies are meant to maintain the status quo prioritizing the majority.

Of particular relevance to the PoP is the lack of racialized data collection in the LDSB. This is a problem as the lack of race-based data collection culminates in a situation where there is no statistical data to prove the existence of systemic racism in the discipline of Black and Indigenous students. Hence, race and economics become invisible in data collection. The promotion of colour blindness, due to the lack of race-based data collection, and invisible social class is in direct conflict with many LDSB's social justice imperatives as it denies a discussion of inequitable wealth and power distribution in society (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Sefa Dei, 2008). This statistical data would provide undeniable proof of the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students within the school board. The lack of public data collection is a direct result of neoliberal policies which conflict with LDSB's transformational leadership as reflected in the board's vision, mission, and commitment statements (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). While the LDSB encourages and supports its educational leaders to become change agents within their own charge to fulfill the board mandates, the result of the colour blind definition of equity continues to create an inequitable learning environment for Black and Indigenous students (Board Website, 2021; Northouse, 2019; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017), and works counter to socio-democratic values by further marginalizing the most vulnerable in society (Green, 2016; Hursh & Martina, 2016).

## **LDSB Challenges with Progressive Discipline Practice**

The second issue the LDSB faces with respect to addressing disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students is the current application of progressive discipline. Progressive discipline is built on middle-class principles meant to engage students in discussion-based discipline and inspire cultural mobility (Milne & Aurini, 2015). This allows parents from higher SES backgrounds to have more success negotiating the progressive discipline model to achieve favourable disciplinary outcomes for their children (Milne & Aurini, 2015). As such, many Black and Indigenous segments of the population are disadvantaged by the current application of progressive discipline (Kumashiro, 2000; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017).

While well-meaning, the progressive discipline model still emphasizes the idea of “student choice” (Levinsky, 2016). The idea that students “choose” to misbehave is a leftover from zero-tolerance policies (Levinsky, 2016). There are certainly cases where this is true. However, in the cases of students reacting to trauma or racism, this model disregards adaptive responses which many students may exhibit (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Levinsky, 2016). The disparity attached to progressive discipline models are highlighted in both Gregory et al.’s (2017) article on disparity in school discipline and Pollock et al.’s (2017) study of Ontario expulsion and suspension data. The problem with progressive discipline was acknowledged by the Ontario Ministry of Education in 2013 when they published *Supporting Bias-Free Progressive Discipline in Schools: A Resource Guide for School and System Leaders* (2013). To the best of my knowledge, this document is widely unknown by school administrators in the LDSB.

## **Leadership Position and Lens Statement**

As a newcomer to the LDSB, who still ranks low in the educational hierarchy, my position as a committee member on the Trauma-Sensitive Schools Change Committee (TSSCC) (to be discussed in more detail later) will need to be leveraged in order to effect sustainable change. My work within this committee will be guided by my leadership philosophy.

### **Philosophy of Leadership**

My philosophy of leadership incorporates a transformative leadership approach rooted in a critical lens. Social justice and transformative leadership share the common goal of restructuring education to dismantle systems causing inequity and disadvantage (Caldwell et al., 2012; Shields, 2010; Shields, 2018; van Oord, 2013). *Transformative leadership* is defined by Carolyn Shields (2010) as “a form of leadership grounded in an activist agenda, one that combines a rights-based theory that every individual is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect, and absolute regard with a social justice theory of ethics that takes these rights to a societal level” (p. 571). This leadership philosophy necessitates an understanding of the connection between education and society (Shields, 2010). As such, Shields’ (2018) eight tenets of transformative leadership theory will be discussed and incorporated throughout this OIP.

A more equitable and inclusive learning environment must be envisioned and created in the LDSB by recognizing that our current educational environment is rooted in Euro-Canadian middle-class values which are at their root exclusionary to the majority of Black and Indigenous students (Ryan & Rottman, 2007; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Theoharis, 2007). The historic disconnect between the educational system and Black and Indigenous students and their families must be healed by examining the ways in which race, ethnicity, and class are treated within our educational systems (Shields & Mohan, 2008; Theoharis, 2007). Consequently, utilizing a

critical theory approach to leadership, rooted in transformative leadership, becomes a meaningful way of disassembling oppressive educational practices and policies and becoming responsive to student needs (Crosby et al., 2018; Shields & Mohan, 2008). This will require me to extend LDSB's transformational leadership understanding of school reform and improvement to incorporating critical theory based on race and the principles of social justice (Shields, 2010, p. 563). The relationship between the transformational leadership of the LDSB and my transformative leadership work on the TSSCC are, therefore, mutually symbiotic as they complement each other with respect to addressing the PoP.

My awareness and action on the issues of inequity faced by Black and Indigenous students being excluded from learning environments will allow for focus on rectifying an inequity marginalizing them (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018; Caldwell et al., 2012; Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020, Gorski, 2016a; Gregory et al., 2017; Kumashiro, 2000; Levinsky, 2016; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Shields, 2018; Theoharis, 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). This would involve the implementation of educational practices and policies that place equity at the forefront and recognize the work of anti-racism (Codjoe, 2001; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Theoharis, 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). When looking at the PoP utilizing Shields' (2018) eight tenets of transformative leadership, I will be able to maintain focus on the PoP as an issue of equity.

While transformative leadership in education may not result in drastic societal transformation, the acknowledgement of societal inequities and privilege, coupled with continual reflection and learning, will allow me to create OIP recommendations that improve the situation for Black and Indigenous students (Shields, 2010; van Oord, 2013). In an effort to create a more equitable experience for the entire student population, the utilization of a transformative

leadership philosophy will allow for respectful dialogue to occur with the aim of counteracting the culture of power prevalent in our current educational system and processes (Shields, 2018). Further, a transformative leadership approach will allow me to view the problem of Black and Indigenous student exclusion through a holistic view of students' educational and emotional needs. The use of the transformative leadership approach will allow me to use initiatives as a part of the TSSCC to encourage educators to reconstruct knowledge frameworks which perpetuate inequity in their own schools and result in the marginalization of Black and Indigenous students (Shields, 2018).

### **Agency**

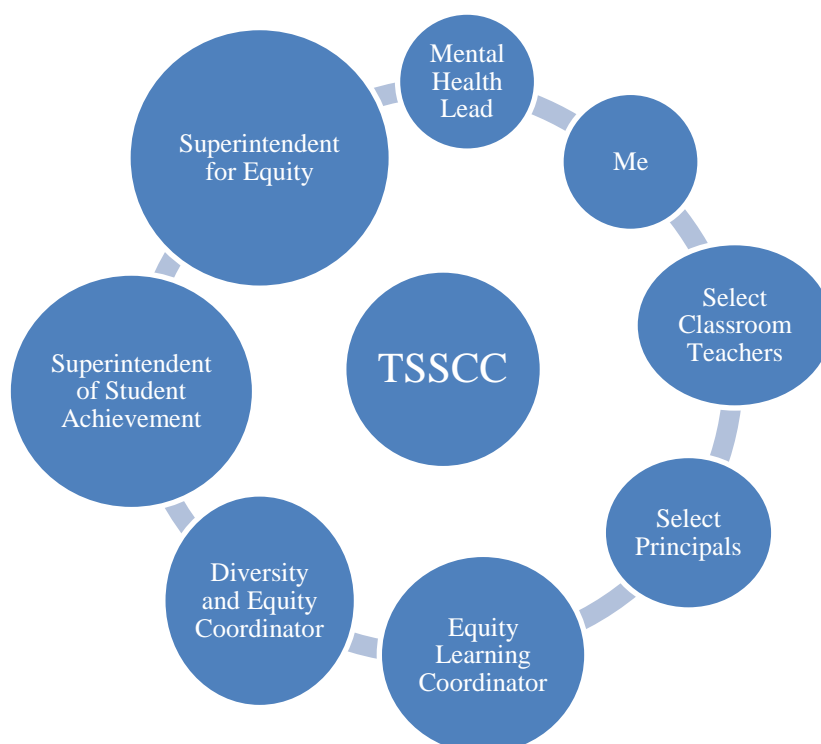
At this point, it is important to recognize my own position of power and privilege. As a middle-class White woman, it will be imperative for me to demonstrate throughout this OIP my positionality and reflexivity. *Reflexivity* can be defined as a conscious self-awareness by understanding how knowledge is constructed (Finlay, 2016). By using reflexivity throughout this OIP, "subjectivity can be transformed from a problem to an opportunity" (Finlay, 2016, p. 531). As such, ongoing critical self-reflection to challenge my own bias and constructions of reality will be an uncomfortable and necessary part of my learning journey (Finlay, 2016). The practice of reflexivity will be a useful tool to achieve rich insight into the PoP (Finlay, 2016).

It is not my intention to speak for Black and Indigenous students or their communities. In fact, it is essential that I use my reflexivity to understand my positionality as an outsider to Black and Indigenous lived experiences (Finlay, 2016). It is my hope that I can position myself as a ready ally to Black and Indigenous communities who seeks equity in educational systems, policies, and practices. Being prepared to engage in careful, systematic, and in-depth self-evaluation will allow me to demonstrate integrity and not compromise the research contained

within this OIP (Finlay, 2016). Using my transformative leadership beliefs and reflexivity, I will advocate as a chosen classroom teacher member of the TSSCC for more marginalized voices to be heard and regularly represented in board decisions and encourage others in the majority to be open to a new awareness surrounding the exclusion of Black and Indigenous students.

### Figure 1

*Current Trauma-Sensitive Schools Change Committee (TSSCC) Membership*



In terms of utilizing my agency within the TSSCC, transformative leadership from the middle will allow for real-time innovation engaging multiple stakeholders to create a successful change initiative (Fullan, 2015). The membership of the current TSSCC can be seen in Figure 1 above. With the understanding that inclusivity will create productive and contributing members of society benefiting all, the TSSCC will implement change initiatives which will alter current inequitable exclusionary discipline practices (King & Stevenson, 2017; Shields, 2018). Van Oord (2013) tells us that “deliberate and collaborative decision-making are not optional but essential

for educational organizations in the twenty-first century” (p. 424). As such, I will encourage continuous innovation by members of the TSSCC, given their varied portfolios, to create planned, systemic change in the LDSB (Fullan, 2015). This will be essential when carrying out a change initiative focused on addressing systemic barriers experienced by Black and Indigenous students which result in the maintenance of systems of power and privilege.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

As educators, we have an ethical obligation to ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed and that inequity is addressed (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). Fundamentally, the systemic exclusion of Indigenous and Black students in our schools must be eradicated. This necessitates changes in the way educators think about oppression, privilege, and the entrenchment of racism in societal institutions to counteract the systemic racism that permeates our educational institutions (Kumashiro, 2000). The PoP is that Black and Indigenous students are being suspended and expelled disproportionately within the LDSB. This is creating an exclusionary and inequitable learning environment for Indigenous and Black students. What steps can be taken to reduce the number of Black and Indigenous students being expelled and suspended?

The PoP cannot be understood without recognition of the privilege and power dynamics that are historically entrenched in all educational systems. Ultimately, this PoP exists due to practices informed by colonial and racist ideas and beliefs that are entrenched in society and have found their way into our educational institutions. Colonialism, enacted under the guise of democracy, reinforces inequitable power systems and educational practices and perpetuates the marginalization of Indigenous and Black students (Wotherspoon, 2014). This is reflected in the fact that Indigenous and Black students are disproportionately enrolled in special education



programs, streamed into applied classes, and more likely to receive suspensions and expulsions (Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Sefa Dei, 2007).

As equity policy in Ontario has become concerned with the results of standardized tests and culminated in the erasure of race and class, race has become invisible and ignored (Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020; Rezai-Rashti, et al., 2017). The ideas and policies of whiteness and neoliberalism exclude and undermine the rights of racialized minority students in our schools (George et al., 2020; Gorski, 2016a; Kumashiro, 2000; Mayor, 2018; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Sofa Dei, 2007; Wotherspoon, 2014). Consequently, the concept of colour blindness, witnessed by the lack of race-based data historically collected in the LDSB, has served to perpetuate the racism within our educational institutions (Sefa Dei, 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Educational policies and practices, predicated on neoliberal concepts that work to prioritize the market at the expense of individual rights, work counter to what many educators believe should be happening in our systems (Wotherspoon, 2014). Therefore, we need to find more effective methods of refocusing on true equity and inclusion to serve the needs of Black and Indigenous students (Codjoe, 2001, Sefa Dei, 2007). Thus, the conditions that are creating inequitable discipline for Black and Indigenous students require examination and changes are needed to rectify the current inequity.

The current application of progressive discipline in Ontario has resulted in Indigenous and Black students being 2-3 times more likely to receive exclusionary discipline measures (Crosby et al., 2018; Gregory et al., 2017; Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017; Sefa Dei, 2007; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). The LDSB Director contends that there is a clear disconnect between Indigenous and Black student needs and current practices in the LDSB (Rivers, 2020). In the

October 2020 Community of Schools meeting, the LDSB Director stated that Indigenous students were suspended in the 2018-2019 school year at a rate more than double their peers (Board Email, 2020). Further, the factors of implicit bias, systemic racism, and trauma were cited as reasons for the disproportionately high suspension and expulsion rates in the LDSB (Board Email, 2020). The problematic application of progressive discipline practice has resulted in an educational system which is not inclusive. Indeed, the effect of educational policies and systemic racism can be witnessed by the fact that levels of educational attainment for Indigenous and Black students are significantly lower than their White counterparts and these same students are more likely to drop out of school entirely (Codjoe, 2001; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Wotherspoon, 2014). After all, repeated exclusion from learning environments through repeated suspensions disadvantages Black and Indigenous students academically and sends a clear message that they are not valued. These facts indicate that administrators and teachers need to be more responsive to the needs of the entire student community and that changes in discipline application need to occur to meet student needs. It is the goal of this OIP for Black and Indigenous students to receive discipline resulting in schools that are inclusive and safe.

### **Framing the Problem of Practice**

In order to truly understand the issues surrounding the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students, a discussion of the historical changes in Ontario education must occur. This discussion will provide the background to the current circumstances creating the PoP and develop an understanding of how these practices and policies are negatively impacting Black and Indigenous students in the LDSB.

## **Historical Overview of the PoP**

The last thirty years have seen many changes in terms of the definition of equity and disciplinary policies in Ontario education. Between 1996 and 2003, the Harris Conservative government's Common Sense Revolution changed education policy prioritizing accountability and efficiency (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). It was under this government that the neoliberal reform agenda established the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) which introduced evidence-based policy-making to close achievement gaps (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). The neoliberal agenda also extended to the enactment of the Safe Schools Act (2000) introducing a zero-tolerance approach to school safety (Levinsky, 2016). This act shifted responsibility from the school to the student and was couched in the language of "student choice" (Levinsky, 2016). These changes resulted in a contradiction between inclusive education, the creation of classrooms where everyone is welcomed and included, and exclusionary discipline, where Black and Indigenous students are disproportionately sent home from school and excluded from learning environments (Levinsky, 2016). During this time period, the zero-tolerance approach to discipline was disproportionately applied to racial minorities while the EQAO data collection made marginalized populations statistically invisible (Levinsky, 2016; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012).

In 2007, the McGuinty Liberals enacted an amendment to the Education Act introducing progressive discipline (Levinsky, 2016). Born from reactions to the Safe Schools Act zero-tolerance measures, progressive discipline was intended to make consequences proportionate to student behaviour (Levinsky, 2016; Winton, 2012). Further, in 2009, the Liberals also created an action plan to address educational equity by examining systemic barriers and power dynamics (George et al., 2020). In 2013, in response to Ontario Human Rights Commission complaints,

Ontario introduced a policy document, *Supporting Bias-Free Progressive Discipline*. This document's existence acknowledges the flaws in progressive discipline practice and asked school leaders to be aware of mitigating factors and discrimination in the use of discipline. In 2016 and 2017, the Wynne Liberals acknowledged systemic racism in educational institutions by introducing an Anti-Racism Directorate (ARD) and announced plans to collect race-based data (George et al., 2020). This culminated in the publication of *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan* (2017) which outlined steps to be taken towards creating a more equitable educational experience for marginalized students. While the Liberal move towards educational equity was a step in the right direction, the lack of funding and accountability left the policies unenforceable (George et al., 2020). Inadvertently, both progressive discipline and the liberal action plan to address equity served to reinforce the neoliberal agenda (George et al., 2020; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012).

When Ford's Conservatives came to power in 2018, they promptly dismantled the ARD and any plans to collect race-based data (George et al., 2020). George et al. (2020) contend that the lack of data is a barrier to addressing racial inequity and that erasure of race from the equity discussion is an act of symbolic anti-racism. This is key to the PoP as the lack of race-based data available, and connected to disciplinary and academic outcomes within the LDSB, serves to make invisible discriminatory treatment. The only school board in Ontario to gather race-based data connected to academic and disciplinary outcomes is the Toronto District School Board (George et al., 2020; TDSB, 2018).

In Ontario today, equity in educational policy is used with reference to legal frameworks, and race continues to not be treated as a systemic marginalizing issue (George et al., 2020). Indeed, equity has been largely focused on language, gender, and special needs (George et al.,

2020; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). The lack of race-based data, the colour blindness of our educational systems under the guise of multiculturalism, and the lack of policy documents mentioning historical and institutional racism culminate in a system unprepared to take concrete steps to rectify inequity (George et al., 2020). By doing so, our institutions practice a form of symbolic anti-racism in which whiteness continues to be privileged (Kumashiro, 2000; Mayor, 2018; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Specht, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Walter et al., 2006).

Neoliberalism runs deep in educational policies. Influenced by neoliberal ideals, the current equity policy places the onus of failure on the individual as opposed to something systemic or structural (George et al., 2020). This is reinforced by progressive discipline policies which, although shifting away from the zero-tolerance regime, continue to emphasize risk management and student choice, concepts leftover from zero-tolerance policies (Levinsky, 2016). Systemic pathways to failure are further witnessed through ministry assigned duties such as teacher mandated reporting and the problems with ‘resilience’ and ‘grit’ talk (Gorski, 2016b; Mayor, 2018).

Currently, in Ontario, there is a disproportionate likelihood that Black and Indigenous students will receive harsher punishments than any other group in schools (George et. al., 2020; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017; TDSB, 2018; Winton, 2012; Wotherspoon, 2014). The acknowledgement of this problem has led to some recent changes in suspension and expulsion policies in Ontario. In September of 2020, the Ontario Ministry of Education changed the *Education Act* to ban JK-3 suspensions (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019).

### **Anti-Oppressive and Critical Race Theoretical Frameworks (AO and CRT)**

As my Problem of Practice is focused on disproportionate Black and Indigenous student suspension and expulsion, the AO and CRT will provide the foundation for analyzing the PoP (Sewell, 2016). The AO, with its roots in social work theory, acknowledges the need to cease the oppression of marginalized voices in education and redistribute resources to remove educational barriers for marginalized groups (Kumashiro, 2000; Sewell, 2016). As such, the AO will be used throughout this OIP to include marginalized voices in the proposed solution and allow a way forward for rectifying the PoP.

Similarly, the CRT has been chosen to frame the PoP as it provides a way in which educational leaders can “eliminate racial inequities” and create “equitable, socially just schools” (Capper, 2019, p. 101). The CRT contends that racism is pervasive, permanent, and must be challenged (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). CRT educational scholars have successfully used CRT to move from “a racial deficit perspective to unearthing the prevalence and persistence of racism within society and reproduced in education and schools” (Capper, 2019, p. 103). Hence, this framework argues that an oppressive system is deeply embedded in society and that ministries of education perpetuate systemic inequality by failing to acknowledge race as a category of inequity (George et al., 2020). Understanding that educational institutions perpetuate racism through their policies and practices is a first step towards addressing the systemic nature of the PoP (Capper, 2019). As such, using the CRT allows for a new understanding of the PoP through which to achieve social justice change in education. Indeed, the CRT has had success in educational reform.

As the colour blindness of current equity policies in Ontario serve to continue the legacy of White privilege (Vaught & Castagno, 2008), the CRT provides a way to address the

pervasiveness of colour blindness in our current educational policies by allowing for increased awareness amongst educational stakeholders that schools reflect white culture and are not race neutral (Capper, 2019). Therefore, the CRT tenet of critiquing liberalism allows for educators “to understand how the concept of color-blindness reflects a racist perspective and denies historical racism and the current and pervasiveness of racism” (Capper, 2019, p. 122). The incorporation of CRT throughout this OIP recognizes the need for increased awareness amongst educators of “the pervasive racial micro-aggressions, societal racism, and systemic racism that individuals of color experience daily and the way racism permeates all aspects of schools” (Capper, 2019, p. 120). Additionally, by using the CRT tenet of interest convergence, I can argue that changes to current discipline practices benefit all students while protecting Black and Indigenous students from harmful current practices (Capper, 2019). Vaught & Castagno (2008) argue that “racism adapts to any new ideology introduced, accommodating the discourse within a framework of continued racial supremacy” (p. 110). Consequently, CRT provides a theoretical framework through which to “challenge and eliminate racist assumptions” in educational policies and practices (Capper, 2019, p. 121). This is essential to addressing the PoP which is deeply rooted in systemic racism.

### **Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice**

Three major lines of inquiry stem from the PoP. They are:

- 1- How is the application of progressive discipline disadvantaging Indigenous & Black students in the LDSB?
- 2- How do we reformulate or reimagine current policies and procedures to disrupt inequitable discipline application?
- 3- Are LDSB administrators aware of the systemic barriers of progressive discipline and the lack of trauma awareness present in this practice?

**What factors contribute to or influence the problem?**

Progressive discipline, neoliberalism, and the continuance of neocolonialism in our schools all contribute to the PoP. Some academics argue that these policies are a conscious effort by the systems of whiteness, neoliberalism, and governmentality to maintain an oppressive system that does not address the needs of marginalized students and continues systematic exclusion (Gorski, 2016a; Mayor, 2018; Sefa Dei, 2008; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Specht, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Walter et al., 2006). When viewed through a transformative leadership lens, rooted in an AO and CRT frameworks, this situation mandates the need for deep and equitable change (Shields, 2018).

Two major challenges arise from an analysis of the PoP. First, government policies and neoliberalism are outside of my agency. Secondly, I am incapable of changing the systemic racism which pervades our society. However, I do believe that an argument can be made that the priorities of neoliberalism can be served by meeting the needs of our Indigenous and Black students. Shields & Mohan (2008) contend that “the ultimate social impact of students’ lack of success is increased economic costs and loss of economic benefits to society as a whole” (p. 294). Consequently, as economic competitiveness is the ultimate goal of neoliberalism, equitable policies provide a bridge between the PoP and the neoliberalist agenda. The economic goals of the neoliberal agenda and the social justice goals of creating an equitable discipline policy for Black and Indigenous students can converge to meet the transformational leadership goal of organizational improvement while serving the transformative leadership tenet of acknowledging the power and privilege existing within our educational policies and practices (Shields, 2010, p. 563). If the goal of neoliberalism is truly to create a more prosperous economic future, it follows that the neoliberal interests would be served by creating a truly inclusive and equitable school



environment allowing for increased academic outcomes for Black and Indigenous students (Bendell et al., 2017; Caldwell et al., 2012; Christopher & Taylor, 2011; Ryan & Rottmann, 2007; Shields, 2018; Theoharis, 2007).

### **Leadership-Focused Vision for Change**

Frontier & Rickenbaugh (2015) pose four questions about change which aid in the analysis of the gap between current discipline practice and the desired state of complete inclusion of Black and Indigenous students in our classrooms and schools. They ask: “Why is change necessary? How much change needs to occur? Where should the change occur? Who will participate in the change process?” (para. 3). These questions will be used to explore the leadership-focused vision for change.

Changes to current discipline policies and practices are necessary to create congruence between the LDSB’s mission and values and the current discipline practice which is creating an inequitable educational environment for Black and Indigenous students. By refocusing on equity from a race-based viewpoint, the inclusion of Black and Indigenous students will result in pathways to success. These changes will also serve students and the LDSB community as a refocus on race-based equity and equitable disciplinary policies will encourage the restoration of public faith in our educational institutions. Furthermore, changes make sense as concerns revolving around the issue of racial equity increase. The raised awareness in society and the LDSB, caused in part because of the Black Lives Matter Movement and COVID-19, have caused an awakening in the LDSB of systemic racism (Bowden, 2020; Pellow, 2016; Rajendra et al., 2020; SMHO, 2020). This has caused many stakeholders to understand that the privilege of current progressive discipline application, combined with an awareness of racial trauma and the result of microaggressions on Black and Indigenous students, require change to occur in the

LDSB (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Milne & Aurini, 2015; SMHO, 2020; Shields, 2018; Sue et al., 2007). As current disciplinary application is resulting in repeat offences and higher dropout rates, the LDSB must adopt frameworks and new approaches that encourage inclusion (Gregory et al., 2017; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Shields, 2018). Further, with the understanding that inclusive and respectful conditions will serve to create productive and contributing members of society benefiting all, the TSSCC will engage in courageous and brave conversations to alter current disciplinary structures and processes that work counter to the best interests of our Black and Indigenous student populations (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Shields, 2018).

A great deal of change needs to occur within the LDSB to achieve the envisioned future state. The envisioned future state would be one where discipline is implemented through an anti-racist lens leading to equitable outcomes for Black and Indigenous students. These require an understanding of why the problem has occurred and how it is manifesting in the PoP. A change in systemic barriers to Black and Indigenous student success will allow students to feel connected and valued within our educational institutions. Indeed, the systemic nature of the PoP requires the deconstruction and reconstruction of the current system which has resulted in inequity (Shields, 2018). The transformative leadership tenets outlined by Shields (2018) which emphasize the need to create deep change and deconstruct knowledge frameworks enforcing inequity will be utilized to construct new approaches to discipline. The use of these tenets will require the TSSCC to extend the LDSB's transformational leadership goal of an organization running smoothly and efficiently to the transformative leadership goal of a renewed focus on the concept of equity within our educational structures and an examination of the deleterious effects of exclusionary discipline (Shields, 2010, p. 563).

Change needs to occur at all levels of the LDSB to address the PoP. This change initiative will be developed by utilizing the AO and CRT which acknowledge that racism “is a systemic structural problem that is constructed and maintained by the collective acts of many individuals, but which is larger and more powerful than any individual” (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, p. 101). First, change must occur in the classroom through educating and challenging educators to think outside of their previous training and assumptions which would result in challenging their concepts of equity and student choice (Levinsky, 2016; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). By engaging educators as change agents, and recognizing that true leadership is a behaviour, the development of a collective responsibility that reaches beyond current policy will culminate in educational change and systemic pathways to success (Bendell et al, 2017; Green, 2017; King & Stevenson, 2017; Ryan & Rottman, 2007).

Secondly, change must occur at the administrative level to raise awareness of how progressive discipline is based on Euro-Canadian middle-class values which disadvantage many Black and Indigenous students (Milne & Aurini, 2015). Administrators must develop an awareness of the systemic barriers in place for Black and Indigenous students which maintain privilege and prioritize whiteness (Mayor, 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Specht, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Finally, change must occur at the board level in order to alter the definition of equity to include race, use race-based data to provide statistical proof illustrating systemic oppression, and systems must be put in place to reduce the suspensions and expulsions of Black and Indigenous students (George et al., 2020; Gregory et al., 2017; Levinsky, 2016; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). This can only come about by challenging the current colour blindness of our equity

policies through systemic change (Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020, Kumashiro, 2000; Levinsky, 2016; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014).

All educational stakeholders must participate in this change process. The TSSCC, the Director of the LDSB, Black and Indigenous students, educators, and the community are all interested stakeholders in bringing about changes to the current application of discipline. The internal stakeholders in the LDSB are students, teachers, educational assistants, administrators, superintendents, and the LSDB Director. The external stakeholders are parents, community members, and the Ontario Ministry of Education. The TSSCC has been formed due to the LDSB Director's concern about current high suspension rates and the disproportionate amount of Black and Indigenous students being suspended or expelled (Crosby et al., 2018; Gregory et al., 2017; Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017). The creation of an acute awareness of the systemic marginalization of Black and Indigenous students will result in a call to action engaging multiple LDSB stakeholders (Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020; Gorski, 2016a; Gregory et al., 2017; Kumashiro, 2000; Levinsky, 2016; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Mayor, 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017; Theoharis, 2007; Winton, 2012; Wotherspoon, 2014). As the LDSB's mission and vision are focused on building students for their futures and embracing diversity, the board is philosophically positioned to enact changes to current inequitable policies and practices (Board Website, 2021). The TSSCC will work to address one of these systemic inequalities.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

The transformational leadership in the LDSB is reflected in recent initiatives meant to ready the LDSB for change (Board Website, 2021). Four initiatives should be considered when discussing the change readiness of the LDSB. First, in the 2020-2021 school year, the LDSB has

begun to collect racialized data by having students voluntarily self-identify. Although this data has yet to be tied to suspension and expulsion rates, it is an important first step towards collecting data which will definitively show the exclusion of racialized students through discipline. By allowing students to self-identify, LDSB leaders work counter to what Theoharis characterized as maintaining “power and privilege for certain groups of people” (Theoharis, 2007, p. 238). Indeed, the historic lack of race-based data collection indicates that there was an avoidance in the past of tangible proof of systemic inequities. The importance of this data cannot be underestimated as it works towards removing colour blindness from our current data collection (George et al., 2020; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). Secondly, the LDSB has created a Superintendent of Equity position and staffed the position with our first superintendent woman of colour. The creation of this position indicates that the board acknowledges the need to prioritize true equity (Rivers, 2021).

Thirdly, the LDSB Director instructed the LDSB Mental Health Lead to create the TSSCC. The creation of this committee reflects an understanding at the systems level of a need to alter our current progressive discipline practice to take into account misunderstood behaviours which are adaptive responses (Levinsky, 2016; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Perry & Daniels, 2016; Specht, 2012). This committee is composed of a group of like-minded educational stakeholders and includes the LDSB Mental Health Lead, select classroom teachers with knowledge of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices, the Equity Learning Coordinator, Diversity and Equity Coordinator, Superintendent of Student Achievement, Superintendent for Equity, and selected principals with a strong social justice stance. As a classroom teacher with knowledge of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices, the Mental Health Lead has requested my membership on the TSSCC. The change roles are shown in Table 1 below. Finally, the LDSB issued a memo to

school administrators requiring superintendent consultations before suspending marginalized students more than once. This acknowledges an awareness at the systems level that marginalized students are at an increased risk of exclusionary discipline. This policy is in contrast to the past practice where principals made these decisions independently. Additionally, the LDSB issued a directive stating that principals needed to consult their superintendents when suspending students with IEPs or Indigenous status. Hence, changes are beginning to address the suspension and expulsion rates.

When all four initiatives are taken into account, the LDSB appears to be readying itself for organizational change. However, these initiatives will not, in isolation, achieve the envisioned state of an equitable educational experience for Black and Indigenous students. Gorski's (2016a) argument that a true equity literacy framework must recognize, respond, redress, and sustain equity efforts is particularly poignant here. The transformational leadership approach of the LDSB with its emphasis on vision, inclusion, authenticity, and morality when coupled with the OIP recommendations seek to disrupt the continued overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous students being suspended and expelled within the LDSB. It is the hope that this OIP will allow for the successful implementation of the LDSB's mission and vision in order to create true inclusivity in the LDSB's learning environments (Board Website, 2021; Northouse, 2019). Currently, the LDSB is attempting to rectify this situation by utilizing *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan* (2017) when pursuing its transformational agenda. This awareness would result in the construction of new educational policies and practices through an anti-racist lens and provide a way forward to rectify the current inequities experienced by our Black and Indigenous students (Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020; Gorski, 2016a; Gregory et al., 2017; Mayor, 2018; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014).

**Table 1***Change Roles of the TSSCC*

<b>Change Role</b>	<b>Role Description</b>	<b>Member</b>
<b>Change Initiator</b>	Identifies the need and vision for change	LDSB Director
<b>Change Leader</b>	Leading the change	Mental Health Lead
<b>Change Implementer(s)</b>	Responsible for making change happen, charting the path forward, and getting rid of resistance	Mental Health Lead, Equity Learning Coordinator, Diversity and Equity Coordinator, Superintendent of Student Achievement, Superintendent for Equity
<b>Change Facilitators</b>	Assist implementers, initiators, and recipients through the change process.	Me, select classroom teachers, and select principals
<b>Change Recipient</b>	Affected by the change	LDSB Administrators

*Note.* Adapted from “Managerial Roles and Organizational Change,” by Cawsey, T., Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T., 2016, *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*. (3rd ed.) SAGE. p. 26.

What remains is for other educational stakeholders to become part of the change. Three pieces are missing to accomplish this: system-wide awareness, a creation of a crisis, and a change vision which will be championed as a solution to the crisis. These will be spearheaded by the TSSCC with the support of the LDSB Director and senior administration.

In order to create change within the LDSB, a heightened awareness of the need to change must be created (Cawsey et al., 2016). This will be nurtured within the LDSB through education, utilization of internal stakeholders' power bases, and involvement of key leadership (Cawsey et al., 2016). While many in the LDSB are aware of the high suspension rates of Black and Indigenous students, there still needs to be awareness surrounding the colour blindness of our equity definitions, systemic barriers to Black and Indigenous student success, and the impact of racial trauma on students (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020, Kumashiro, 2000; Levinsky, 2016; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; SMHO, 2020; Sue et al., 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). The importance of discussions with internal stakeholders cannot be downplayed in order to raise the needed awareness (Cawsey et al., 2016). Through the TSSCC, more stakeholders can be engaged in framing questions, data collection, and interpretations of the change initiative's progress (Cawsey et al., 2016). One such opportunity exists with the collection of race-based data. In order to raise awareness of stakeholders of the PoP, this data must be connected to suspension and expulsion rates to show the inequity of discipline practice.

By connecting the LDSB mission and goals to inequitable discipline policies, the displeasure amongst LDSB's stakeholders of the perpetuation of inequity will amount to a crisis which will create a need for concrete change (Cawsey, 2016). COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter have raised the issue of systemic inequity for the public and educators (Bowden, 2020; Pellow, 2016; Rajendra et al., 2020; SMHO, 2020). With respect to the PoP, this awareness will produce a realization of the need for change within societal institutions (Cawsey et al., 2016). As such, the connection between these political/societal events to the inequity within our educational institutions, specifically the application of discipline, will create a crisis by making



the “need for change clear and dramatic” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 95). As the LDSB Director is a transformational leader, he will champion the goals of equity by having visible public conversations about discipline application and policies through an anti-racist lens (Cawsey et al., 2016). This will create an understanding of *why* change is needed and generate discussions about *what* is needed (Cawsey et al., 2016).

The combination of increased awareness and the sense of crisis will lead LDSB stakeholders to pursue the shared goals of equitable policies of discipline application (Cawsey et al., 2016; George et al., 2020; Gorski, 2016a; Gregory et al., 2017; Kumashiro, 2000; Levinsky, 2016; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). The envisioned future state where discipline is equitably applied through an anti-racist lens will articulate the gap in current policy. The change vision will create a compelling message to minimize resistance, explore alternative paths, and strengthen the analysis of the change process (Cawsey et al., 2016). The vision of a school board which has equitable policies for Black and Indigenous students will be “a powerful pull on employees to participate positively in the change process” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 121). As determining the boundaries of the change vision are challenging, the change vision will focus on modifying the current practices of discipline application (Cawsey et al., 2016). This will require educators within the LDSB to “unfreeze from past patterns” and go beyond themselves to serve the greater cause of true equity for all students (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 96). The organizational vision of a truly equitable learning environment for Black and Indigenous students will be a much longer-term project while this change initiative will be more specific with tangible outcomes and impact (Cawsey et al., 2016). The change vision will necessitate “emotional energy, commitment, and directional clarity” on the part of the TSSCC as the change initiative proceeds (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 121). The articulation of a

desired future state and the gap in current practice will give LDSB educators confidence that change can be accomplished.

Now that the Problem of Practice has been explained, within the context of Ontario education and the LDSB, it is important to decide how that change will happen and the specifics of what needs to change. This will be explored in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Planning and Development**

In this chapter, an in-depth analysis of the AO and CRT through the transformative leadership tenets will be conducted. In order to choose an appropriate framework for the OIP, a discussion of the Lewin's Stage Theory of Change, Kotter's Stage Model of Organizational Change, and the Change Path Model: Cawsey-Deszca-Ingols (CPM) will be undertaken. Finally, the Nadler and Tushman Congruence Model (NTC) will be utilized to conduct a critical organizational analysis. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the leadership ethics that will be incorporated through the change initiative.

### **Leadership Approaches to Change**

Leadership is often viewed by contemporary theorists as a means to improve the common good and a vehicle for participating in acts of social responsibility (Komives & Dugan, 2010). The PoP, the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students, culminates in an ethical problem rooted in systemic exclusion. Consequently, transformative leadership, an ethically-based leadership model rooted in an activist agenda, is best suited to address this problem (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018; Caldwell et al., 2012; Shields, 2010; Shields, 2018; van Oord, 2013), as it recognizes "the context in which leadership is occurring" (Komives & Dugan, 2010, p. 118). The use of a transformative leadership approach will highlight the gap between current practice and the envisioned future state of true inclusion of Black and

Indigenous students through the prioritization of social justice principles (Caldwell et al., 2012; Shields, 2018; Shields & Mohan, 2008; van Oord, 2013). The transformative leadership approach is well suited to a change initiative in the LDSB given the current transformational leadership approaches in use and the emphasis on inclusion and engagement of all stakeholders in the LDSB vision and commitment statements (Board Website, 2021). Likewise, it is in keeping with the Ontario Leadership Framework which emphasizes stakeholder involvement, high expectations, and the building of trusting relationships (Institute for Education Leadership, 2013).

Carolyn Shields (2010) defines transformative leadership as the belief of a leader “that every individual is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect, and absolute regard with a social justice theory of ethics that takes these rights to a societal level” (p. 571). In her book, *Transformative Leadership in Education: Equitable and Socially Just Change in an Uncertain and Complex World*, Shields (2018) proposes eight tenets of transformative leadership theory.

They are:

the mandate to effect deep and equitable change; the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice; the need to address the inequitable distribution of power; an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good; a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice; an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness; the necessity of balancing critique with promise; and the call to exhibit moral courage. (p. 20-21)

Transformative leadership in an educational context acknowledges societal inequities and encourages continual reflection and learning to create an environment geared to the learning of all children (Shields, 2010; van Oord, 2013). It is through a transformative approach that this

OIP will aim to implement a change initiative that will alter exclusionary discipline practices and policies (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). This OIP will utilize the AO and CRT which complement the transformative leadership approach to allow for the creation of a holistic view of students' educational and emotional needs. It is necessary to unpack Shields eight tenets of transformative leadership to demonstrate how this leadership approach will be used to analyze and address the PoP through the AO and CRT.

Shields' (2018) first tenet of transformative leadership challenges transformative leaders to bring about deep and equitable change. This tenet complements the AO which acknowledges the need to counteract the oppression of marginalized voices and redistribute resources (Kumashiro, 2000; Sewell, 2016). In terms of the PoP, stakeholders must cultivate awareness of the aspects that lead to inequitable suspension and expulsion rates for Black and Indigenous students. The PoP is centred around an issue of equity that requires equitable change. Shields' (2018) second tenet of transformative leadership which mandates "the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice" (p. 20) is supported by the AO and CRT which argue for the need to "acknowledge and counteract the oppression of minority groups" (Sewell, 2016, p. 1) deeply ingrained in society (George et al., 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). These theoretical frameworks will be utilized throughout this OIP as disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates are rooted in knowledge frameworks of which many LDSB administrators are unaware. Initially, this will be accomplished through raising the issue of disproportionate exclusionary discipline experienced by Black and Indigenous students. After the root cause of the problem is brought to light, involvement of various stakeholders will allow administrators and educators to believe in the change initiative (Armenakis & Harris,

2009). It is the hope that the involvement of stakeholders in their own self-discovery and raised awareness will result in genuine buy-in to the change initiative.

Shields' (2018) third tenet of transformative leadership to address inequitable structures of power complements the CRT which argues that "racism is endemic, persistent, and enmeshed" (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019, p. 1074). This framework combined with Shields' third tenet allows for the cultivation of a deeper understanding of the PoP and how the problem has manifested and is being maintained. This is particularly important when considering the impact of progressive discipline application and the effects of equity policies resulting in colour blindness in data collection. Shields' (2018) fourth tenet which stresses the achievement of a balance between individual and collective good will be honoured by ensuring an equitable education for all students. Utilizing this tenet, stakeholders will seek the creation of an equitable discipline policy for Black and Indigenous students in an effort to prioritize true equity for community well-being (Green, 2017). This is in keeping with the CRT which mandates that "power, privilege, and oppression should be addressed" (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019, p. 1087). As such, the PoP when informed by the CRT and transformative leadership tenets would require an equitable discipline policy for Black and Indigenous students in order to truly utilize all of society's human resources. The eradication of exclusionary policies would, therefore, benefit individuals and the community.

Shields' (2018) fifth tenet which necessitates "a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice" is again supported (p. 21), and a deeper understanding of the PoP developed, through the AO and CRT. The PoP, disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students, is at its very core an issue of equity and justice. When viewed through a CRT though, I will need to anticipate that this new awareness amongst stakeholders may not lead

to empathy but rather to the reinvention of existing racist frameworks to continue the current constructions of privilege (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). While this reaction is anticipated, it is my expectation that the understanding of the need for true equity, emphasized by Shields' fifth tenet, will result in the majority of stakeholders honouring their ethical duty to ensure Black and Indigenous students receive an equitable educational experience. The awareness of the ethical issue, theoretically, will result in school administration eradicating structures and processes in their own schools that marginalize, diminish, and exclude Black and Indigenous students (Caldwell, et al., 2019; Shields, 2018; Theoharis, 2007).

Shields' (2018) sixth tenet which focuses on interdependence and interconnectedness of systems allows for the PoP to be seen through a systemic lens (Shields, 2018). The transformative leadership approach combined with the theoretical frameworks will allow for an organizational analysis to identify the symptoms and roots of the problem, namely the systemic racism covertly entrenched in current discipline policies and practices (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; van Oord, 2013). As a leader who is anxious to see change in inequitable policies which marginalize students, I must understand that leadership is a process that will require time, planning, and openness to new ideas in order to achieve the success the change initiative warrants (Komives & Dugan, 2010). This underscores Shield's (2018) seventh tenet which acknowledges a need to balance critique and promise. In essence, continuously critiquing and balancing my own hope of change to create an equitable educational experience for Black and Indigenous students must be tempered by the knowledge that many of my current assumptions and beliefs may lack awareness of other perspectives or additional information.

Finally, the examination of my own privilege and bias to raise my level of self-awareness is in keeping with Shield's (2018) eighth tenet of transformative leadership which calls for moral

courage. As such, my self-awareness will be essential to the use of the transformative leadership approach (Komives & Dugan, 2010). Only through looking at my own bias and controlling my blind spots will I be able to create impactful change. This self-awareness, rooted in the practice of reflexivity, will allow me to remain authentic and effect sustainable change. Additionally, I must be aware of the impact that my privilege has on my understanding of the PoP (Finlay, 2016). The utilization of the CRT will guide me as I must be cognizant of my own privilege and power to be effective in addressing systemic inequity (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019). With the goal of an equitable learning environment for Black and Indigenous students within the LDSB, this awareness, rooted in authenticity and combined with the transformative leadership tenet of courage, will allow for the development of an effective change initiative to combat current inequitable policies (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Shields, 2018; Theoharis, 2007). Further, by modeling my own self-awareness, others on the TSSCC may feel confident in doing the same.

As the transformative leadership approach encourages the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of change (Armenakis & Harris, 2009, Caldwell et al., 2012), the utilization of a transformative leadership philosophy will allow for respectful dialogue to occur with the aim of counteracting the culture of power prevalent in our current educational systems and processes, ready the LDSB for change, and achieve support for the change initiative (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Shields, 2018). Through internal conversations to gain an understanding of resistance to change, a transformative leadership approach will allow for the selection of change initiatives and constitute what Armenakis & Harris (2009) refer to as “valence”. The active participation and self-discovery of different stakeholders will result in genuine buy-in to create sustainable change (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; van Oord, 2013). In keeping with transformative leadership,

the TSSCC will coordinate and engage a variety of stakeholders with common goals (Hill, 2019).

### **Framework for Leading Change Process**

The Black Lives Matter Movement and the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on marginalized communities are external crises that are raising public awareness of the lived reality of systemic racism for Black and Indigenous communities (Bowden, 2020; Pellow, 2016; Rajendra et al., 2020; SMHO, 2020). Indeed, School Mental Health Ontario (2020) has stated that “While systemic oppression is not new, the pandemic has magnified deep-rooted economic, social and racial inequities. These have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable and marginalized communities” (p. 1). These events are generating many conversations within educational communities of how systemic racism is entrenched in our educational institutions, policies, and practices. In order to create successful change, selecting an appropriate change model appropriate for an issue of equity is imperative. A comparison and analysis of Lewin’s Stage Theory of Change, Kotter’s Stage Model of Organizational Change, and the CPM will be conducted in order to select an appropriate change model in which to conduct a change initiative to address the PoP.

#### **Lewin’s Stage Theory of Change**

Cummings et al. (2016) refers to Kurt Lewin as “the founding father of change management” (p. 34) and argues that most change models originate from Lewin’s three-stage model. As such, Lewin’s model must be examined as a possible change model. The first stage in Lewin’s model is the unfreezing stage (Cawsey et al., 2016). The unfreezing stage requires the changing of beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions of an organization and its stakeholders in order to alter the status quo (Cawsey et al., 2016). The second stage is the change stage where an



examination and implementation of alternatives to the status quo occurs (Cawsey et al., 2016). Finally, the third stage is refreezing which transpires once the change initiative is concluded (Cawsey et al., 2016). Lewin's model is attractive as it acknowledges that the unfreezing of an organization often happens as a result of an external crisis (Cawsey et al., 2016).

However, the lack of an awakening stage in Lewin's model does not lend itself well to my PoP. The awakening within the LDSB will be of paramount importance to developing a change initiative. Additionally, as the PoP is rooted in an issue of equity and inclusion, stemming from systemic racism within educational structures, and this OIP seeks to effect deep and equitable change, a more sophisticated analysis is required than provided by Lewin's model. Indeed, Lewin's model has been criticized as being an overly simplistic model that does not acknowledge the continuity of the process of change or include a vision of a future desired state (Cawsey et al., 2016). This model does not address the need for an open systems approach to the PoP. Further, due to the simplicity of Lewin's model, it does not easily allow for the incorporation of the AO and CRT. As my PoP is very complex and multifaceted, the Lewin Stage Theory of Change is not the best fit for my change initiative.

### **Kotter's Stage Model of Organizational Change**

In contrast with Lewin's Model, the Kotter Stage Model of Organizational Change is an eight-stage model which is much more elaborate than Lewin's Model. Its eight stages are: (a) establishing a sense of urgency, (b) creating a coalition, (c) developing a mission and strategy, (d) communicating, (e) empowering employees, (f) generate short-term wins, (g) consolidate gains and produce more change, and (h) anchor new approaches (Cawsey et al., 2016). This model has some attractive aspects compared to Lewin's Model as it incorporates the idea of vision and a desired future state. It also includes the creation of coalitions which will be essential

to the success of my change initiative. However, it is overly prescriptive and does not provide the flexibility my PoP or the transformative leadership approach requires.

Kotter's Model does not place enough emphasis on changes in the environment as being a key driver for change within an organization (Cawsey et al., 2016). The resurgence of Black Lives Matter and the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on marginalized communities are change drivers that enable my change vision and are much more complex than "establish a sense of urgency" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 48). Additionally, addressing an issue of systemic racism, with centuries of entrenchment in societal institutions, requires a model with more flexibility. For the purposes of this OIP, *flexibility* within a change model is defined as allowing for innovative and agile thinking (Kotter, 2012). When selecting a model through a transformative leadership approach influenced by the AO and CRT, it must be acknowledged that "racism adapts to socio-cultural changes by altering its expression, but it never diminishes or disappears" (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, p. 96). Therefore, the inequity being witnessed by the PoP is rooted in something so deep and systemic that flexibility in a change model is mandated to counter adaptations which perpetuate the problem. This will allow a change leader to address moments in the change initiative where the status quo is being upheld. In keeping with that, this model lacks a gap analysis that will be needed to truly analyze the current status quo and its implications on Black and Indigenous students (Codjoe, 2001; Levinsky, 2016; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). Hence, an analysis of a third change model will be necessary.

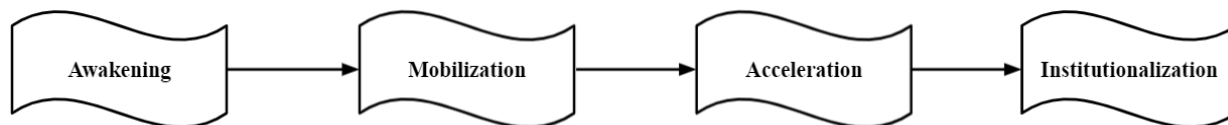
### **The Change Path Model: Cawsey-Deszca-Ingols**

The Change Path Model: Cawsey-Deszca-Ingols (CPM) is a four-stage model shown in Figure 2. The first stage is termed awakening. The awakening is when change initiators must

leverage change drivers by examining their internal and external environments to understand support and resistance for their proposed change initiative (Cawsey et al., 2016). The awakening stage emphasizes the need for internal data to examine what is happening within the organization (Cawsey et al., 2016). The second stage of the CPM is mobilization. This is where the data collected in the awakening stage is analyzed to create a gap analysis and a vision of a desired future state (Cawsey et al., 2016). It is at this stage that discussions and encouraging participation in the change process occur by using multiple communication channels to articulate a desired future state through a gap analysis (Cawsey et al., 2016). In the third stage, acceleration, action planning and implementation allow stakeholders to be systematically engaged to enact the change process (Cawsey et al., 2016). This stage of the CPM emphasizes the need to adapt to new situations as they arise (Cawsey et al., 2016). The fourth and final stage of this change process is the institutionalization of the envisioned future state (Cawsey et al., 2016). At this final stage of the CPM, the monitoring and evaluation of the change initiative will demonstrate reduced suspension and expulsion rates for Black and Indigenous students. Further, new practices and policies will have been achieved and institutionalized in the LDSB.

## Figure 2

*The Change Path Model: Cawsey-Deszca-Ingols*



*Note.* Adapted from “The Change Path Model,” by Cawsey, T., Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T., 2016, *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*. (3rd ed.) SAGE. p. 55.

The CPM is not without its flaws. It is a linear model which does not incorporate a feedback loop. It also does not break down the acceleration stage but simply prescribes action

planning and implementation. Despite its drawbacks, out of all the change models examined, the four-stage model is the best fit, as it allows for flexibility during the change initiative. As the PoP attempts to address a small piece of systemic racism (Kumashiro, 2000; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017; Wotherspoon, 2014), the CPM allows for flexibility, places emphasis on internal and external environmental factors, incorporates a gap analysis and envisioned future state, and understands the need to change stakeholders' perceptions. The weaknesses in the acceleration stage of this model can be mitigated by including sub-stages in this stage. This will be achieved by incorporating Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model (NTC) to conduct a more thorough analysis of what needs to change within the LDSB (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

The CPM is attractive as it acknowledges that the "most powerful drivers for change tend to originate outside organizations" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 53). This is crucial to understanding the timeliness of the PoP. The awakening stage of the CPM is appealing as it allows for considerations of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter as change drivers for this OIP. As educational institutions should be a place where all children feel safe and valued in order to learn, the renewed societal focus on equity will help to create that awakening within the LDSB. Additionally, the examination of data collected during the awakening stage will allow for an analysis of support and resistance to the change initiative. This analysis will occur through the lens of the AO and CRT which acknowledge the adaptability of racism, and educational institutions part in "perpetuate[ing] structural inequity by inadequately recognizing race as a substantial and systemic oppressive feature" (George et al., 2020, p. 160). Additionally, this will support the incorporation of Shields' (2018) transformative leadership tenets which emphasize the need for deep change, reconstruction of knowledge frameworks, inequitable distribution of power, and emphasis on equity and justice. While this model can be criticized as being overly

general, this also allows for the incorporation of agile and innovative thinking on the part of the TSSCC which will be needed to address a complex issue of social justice.

Another attractive aspect of the CPM is the emphasis on measurement at every stage (Cawsey et al., 2016). The use of data collection throughout the change process will build awareness and coalitions amongst stakeholders at all system levels (Cawsey et al., 2016). There have already been some significant shifts in LDSB's awareness of systemic inequity, and a movement towards systemic culture change. This year, for the first time, the LDSB will be asking students to self-identify as a first step towards collecting racial data. When tied to exclusionary discipline, this collection of data will enable the LDSB to numerically demonstrate the disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion experienced by Black and Indigenous students (George et al., 2020; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). The use of data will be essential to counter the naysayers who do not acknowledge the systemic barriers entrenched in current discipline policies and practices (George et al., 2020; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). In conclusion, the CPM will be used in this OIP to create forward momentum to achieve an equitable and inclusive educational experience for Black and Indigenous students.

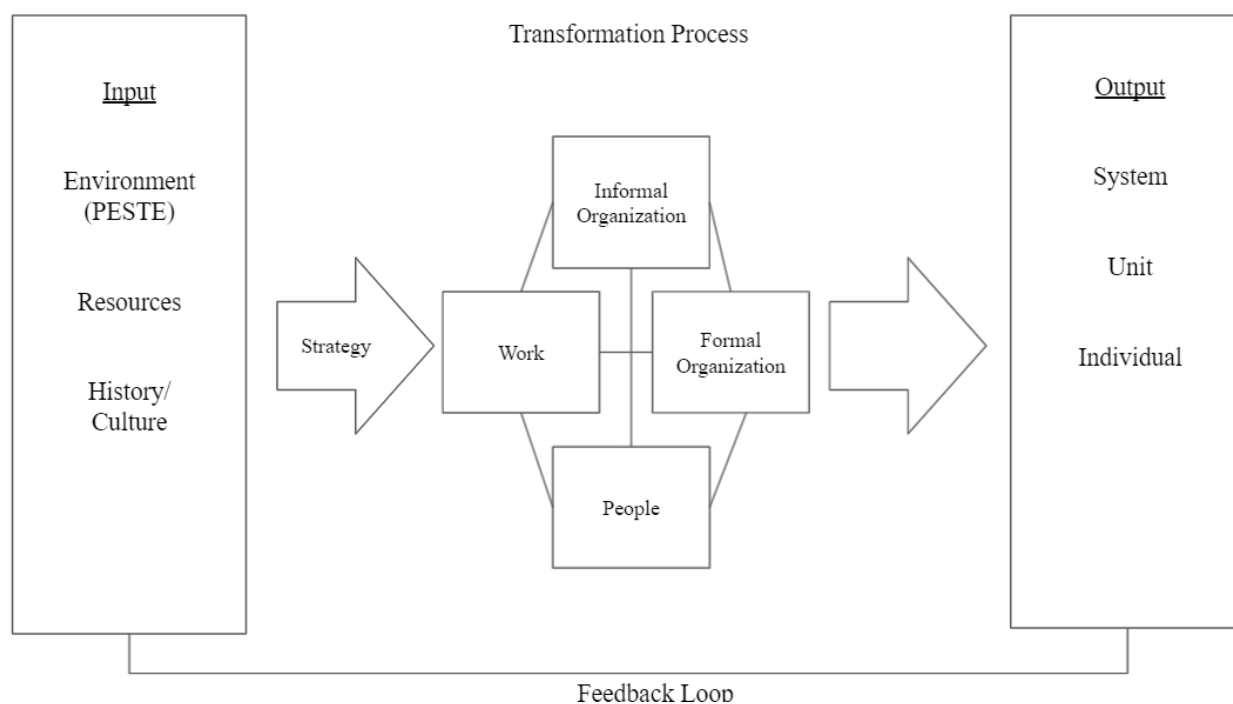
### **Critical Organizational Analysis**

NTC is an open systems model that allows for an intense gap analysis and allows a change agent to ensure all parts of a system are changing to meet the future desired state (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). This model lends itself well to an issue of social justice as is being addressed by the PoP and acknowledges the interconnectedness of systems in perpetuating that problem. This fits well with Shields' (2018) transformative tenets of deep and equitable change and her emphasis on interconnectedness. Additionally, this model is attractive as it fills in the gaps in the

acceleration stage of the CPM which simply prescribes action planning and implementation (Cawsey et al., 2016). The NTC encourages systemic thinking to match strategy and inputs with critical components (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). As such, the NTC, shown in Figure 3, will be utilized as a means to analyze the PoP in order to determine what components need to change to achieve the desired future state. It allows for the flexibility to incorporate innovative and agile thinking that will be necessary when incorporating the transformative leadership tenets through the lenses of the AO and CRT (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

### Figure 3

#### *Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model*



Note. Adapted from "A model for diagnosing organizational behavior," by Nadler, D. and Tushman, M., 1980, *Organizational Dynamics*, 9(2), 47 ([https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616\(80\)90039-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(80)90039-x)).

### Input

Cawsey et al. (2016) state that "If the external environment alters significantly, the internal organization needs to change also" (p. 73). Therefore, an analysis of how environmental

factors drive changes to LDSB's discipline practices is necessitated (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). Nadler & Tushman (1980) emphasize the need for organizations to act and react to their external environment in order to thrive. As there is an increased awareness of societal marginalization of Black and Indigenous communities (Bowden, 2020; Pellow, 2016; Rajendra et al., 2020; SMHO, 2020), the LDSB is now experiencing change drivers that will serve to drive internal changes within our organization. The societal awareness of racial marginalization requires the LDSB to re-think discipline strategy with respect to Black and Indigenous students which aligns with the transformative leadership approach (Shields, 2018). As the NTC recognizes that the system is dynamic, the societal implications of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter may result in lasting changes to the external environment which will serve as a catalyst for the OIP. Already there is an acknowledgement in the LDSB that "The pandemic has been defined as a global traumatic event. The stress of the pandemic is sustained, ongoing, and long-lasting" (Board Document, 2021). Therefore, this model's emphasis on environmental input factors and classification of internal organizational components are appropriate to address the complexity of the PoP (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

As an organization is most effective when congruence exists among all elements and are "able to more efficiently and effectively transform inputs into outputs" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 77), the emphasis on political and economic factors within this model is particularly relevant given the historical evolution of neoliberal policies in Ontario education (Apple, 2017; George et al., 2020; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Mayor, 2018; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). Additionally, this model is appealing when looking at the problem of racism and the resulting marginalization of Black and Indigenous students as it takes into account the historical aspects of the organization (Codjoe, 2001; Levinsky, 2016; Nadler & Tushman, 1980; OHRC, 2003;

Wotherspoon, 2014). As such, the NTC also aligns with the use of the AO and CRT.

Fundamentally, the CRT emphasizes the importance of understanding historical context to grasp issues of contemporary racism (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019). Indeed, George et al. (2019) tells us that organizations “must grapple with racism as a historical, structural, and ideological construct and reality, accounting for inequalities and taking concrete steps to effect change” (p. 171).

The NTC emphasizes the need for organizational leaders to align resources with strategy when examining external environments in order to produce successful change (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). This is in keeping with the AO which acknowledges the redirection of resources to “counteract the oppression of minority groups in society” (Sewell, 2016, p. 1). As the PoP addresses the disproportionate Black and Indigenous student suspension and expulsion rates, a problem of systemic racism, the NTC is particularly attractive given recent changes in the political and social environment which serve as change drivers to the envisioned future state. Through a CRT, this model allows for the acknowledgement that the issue of racism is something systemic, not rooted in individual choice or actions (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). NTC argues that change strategy is central to the NTC, and as such, this model will be used to create change towards a more equitable disciplinary policies and practices for Black and Indigenous students in the LDSB (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). To summarize, the inputs into the NTC: the environment, resources, and history/culture, are essential to understanding how and why the PoP exists (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

### **Transformation Process**

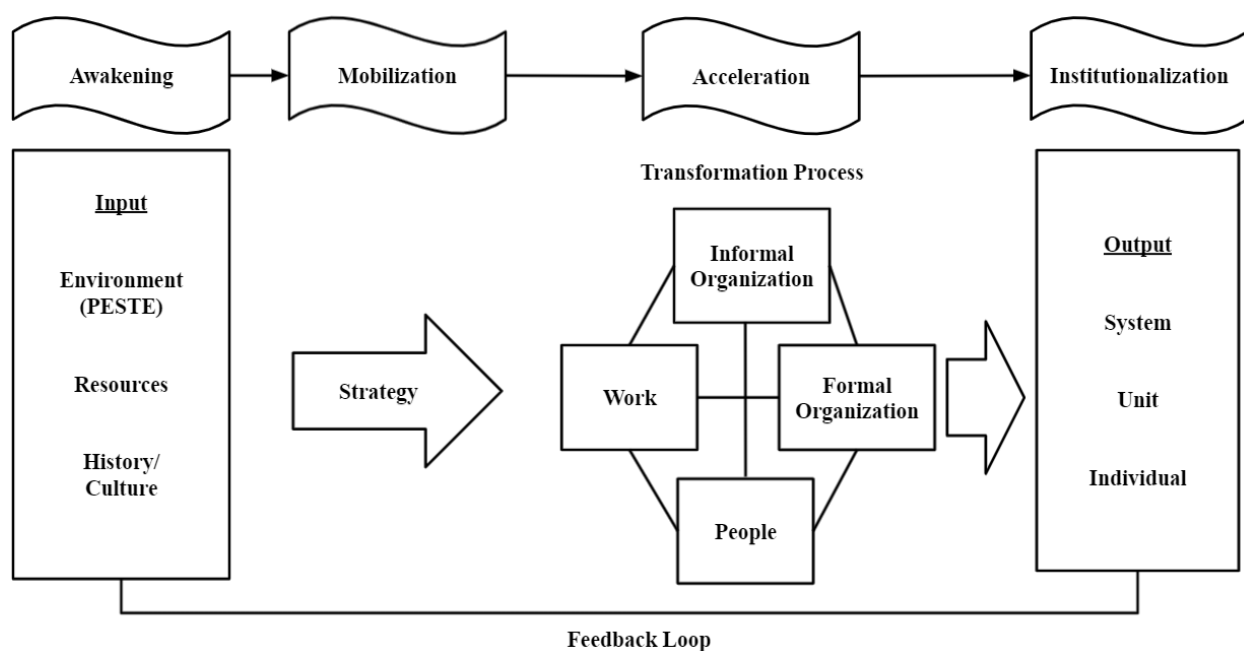
The NTC emphasizes change strategy and an analysis of the objectives of change within the context of the organization (Cawsey et al., 2016). NTC contains a transformation process, not be confused with transformative leadership or transformational leadership, which will allow for



congruence between all parts to aid in achieving a sustainable and successful change initiative (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). The incorporation of the NTC into the CPM will allow for small change initiatives to occur while working towards a larger social justice goal of addressing systemic racism in educational institutions. Figure 4 shows a hybrid model of the CPM and NTC.

**Figure 4**

*Hybrid Model of the CPM and the Nadler and Tushman Congruence Model*



*Note.* Adapted from “The Change Path Model,” by Cawsey, T., Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T., 2016, *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*. (3rd ed.) SAGE. p. 55; Adapted from “A model for diagnosing organizational behavior,” by Nadler, D. and Tushman, M., 1980, *Organizational Dynamics*, 9(2), 47 ([https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616\(80\)90039-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(80)90039-x)).

The use of the transformation process will aid in the analysis of the current gap between the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates and the envisioned future state of true equity in discipline for Black and Indigenous students. Breaking down the transformation process into the elements of the task, people, the formal organization, and the informal organization helps to

analyze the PoP and produce a thoughtful change strategy. The TSSCC will develop a series of initiatives utilizing all aspects of the transformation process to articulate a desired future state through a gap analysis (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). This is in keeping with Cawsey's (2016) assertion that change agents "should tap into the power of teams to accomplish results" (p. 74). It is through that assertion that the change initiative, utilizing the NTC, will be undertaken by the TSSCC.

The NTC is predicated on the need for congruence amongst the four elements for successful change (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). First, work emphasizes analysis of the needed shifts in order to identify the specific gap and develop change plans (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). This is where an analysis of the desired state, an equitable disciplinary practice for Black and Indigenous students, will be conducted. As Cawsey et al. (2016) tell us "When there is a gap between what leaders say their strategy is and what they do, one needs to pay close attention to the strategy in use" (p. 69). This is currently the case with regard to Black and Indigenous suspension and expulsion rates as LDSB's mission and values are based upon inclusivity while the opposite is occurring (Board Website, 2021). The lack of understanding of White privilege by the staff in the LDSB, the construction of a progressive discipline system built on Euro middle-class values, and the general unconscious following of inequitable policies by well-intentioned educators is the result of inadequate strategies to produce a fair and equitable educational experience for Black and Indigenous students (Gorski, 2016a; Kumashiro, 2000; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). Without raising awareness of systemic racism and the prevalence of racial trauma on our Black and Indigenous students amongst a staff that is overwhelming White, inequitable discipline policies will remain in place (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Board Document, 2019; Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020;

Gregory et al., 2017; Mayor, 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Ontario Ministry, 2017; SMHO, 2020; Sue et al., 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Winton, 2012). This will result in marginalized students continuing to be blamed for “bad choices” when they are actually exhibiting adaptive behaviours which are logical given their environment (Levinsky, 2016). Indeed, through a CRT, no action can be taken on this PoP without taking into account systemic racism (Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Secondly, the formal organization necessitates an analysis of how systems and structures within the LDSB are affecting people’s behaviours and how modifications can be made to enable change (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). This is fundamental to understanding the roots of the PoP and reviewing the current inequitable discipline policies (George et al, 2020; Gregory et al, 2017; Levinsky, 2016; Wotherspoon, 2014). While most educators are genuinely unaware of the depths of covert systemic racism in educational policies, the desired result of inequity appears to be planned. Perhaps these are remnants of colonial assumptions or the unintended results of neoliberal policies emphasizing economic imperatives, but more likely, at some level, it has been intentional on a systemic level (Kumashiro, 2000; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). When looking at the PoP through a CRT, the prevalence of racism in discipline policies must be addressed institutionally (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019). The changes in the external environment provide an opportunity, from a transformative leadership approach, to create something different and lasting. It gives the LDSB a chance to make significant changes in a move towards true systemic equity. Thus, when seen through the AO and CRT, the need for change becomes more pronounced.

Thirdly, the NTC takes into consideration the norms and behaviours of individuals and groups within the organization (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). It is in this segment of the

transformation process that awareness of systemic racism, systems of power, privilege and oppression, racial trauma, and the inequities of progressive discipline will be cultivated (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020; Gorski, 2016a; Gregory et al., 2017; Kumashiro, 2000; Levinsky, 2016; Mayor, 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Shields, 2018; Sue et al., 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). Through a transformative leadership approach, this is important because many stakeholder's assumptions and ideas will need to be examined in order to deconstruct existing knowledge frameworks. This shift will be needed in order to achieve deep, equitable, and successful change within the LDSB.

Finally, the informal organization is particularly important in an analysis of change as it understands the culture of an organization. The need to examine LDSB's mission, values, and commitments is essential when looking at the culture, power relationships, and decision-making processes in place through an equity lens and aligning the strategy with the other components (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). An intense analysis of the informal organization, through the AO and CRT, will allow for true understanding of the causes of disproportionate discipline rates. This is necessary to address the changes through a transformative leadership lens. All four components of the transformation process, as shown in Figure 3, are important to consider when developing a successful change initiative to counteract the exclusionary discipline measures being disproportionately applied to Black and Indigenous students.

## **Output**

Finally, the output in this model emphasizes the use of measurement (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Clearly, LDSB needs to track racial data in order to measure the result of inequitable policies (George et al., 2020; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Wotherspoon, 2014). The data collection of students who self-identify linked to suspension and expulsion data in the awakening stage of

the CPM will initially provide concrete proof of the current inequities. Later, this measurement tool will serve to gauge the effectiveness of the change initiative and create energy for the change initiative throughout the change process (George et al., 2020; Nadler & Tushman, 1989). It is anticipated that as new statistical data emerges proving the existence of disproportionate exclusionary discipline within the LDSB, many stakeholders will become increasingly concerned with the current state and will be prepared to accept the need for new policies and approaches to discipline. The envisioned future state would be achieved by administrators who are aware of the systemic racism entrenched in current disciplinary practices and can acknowledge their role in rectifying the situation.

The understanding of the complexity of interrelationships of this model is particularly appealing when addressing an issue of social justice. This model lends itself very well to the AO and CRT being utilized in this OIP. The need for congruence within the LDSB to address an issue of systemic racism, such as disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students, requires changes to all components to meet with success. The feedback loop from output to input is also attractive given the transformative leadership approach utilized in this OIP as it acknowledges the ongoing process of change and hopes that educational changes will impact societal culture to move anti-racism forward.

### **Possible Solutions to Address the PoP**

In selecting a change initiative, several conditions must be met. First of all, any change initiative must be undertaken through a social justice lens with a goal of rectifying the inequitable suspension and expulsion rates experienced by Black and Indigenous students. As such, the chosen solution will utilize the current political momentum of combating racism to raise awareness of an equity crisis in our educational system which necessitates correction within

the current processes and educational mindset. Secondly, any solution proposed must be done through a transformative leadership approach utilizing the AO and CRT frameworks. Thirdly, any solution chosen must be within the grasp of LDSB's resources. Finally, any solution chosen must be in line with *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan (2017)*, which acknowledges the overrepresentation of racialized students in suspensions and expulsions. For the purposes of this section, a thorough analysis of the gap between current practice and the envisioned future state of equitable discipline for Black and Indigenous students reveals three possible solutions to the PoP which fit my criteria.

### **First Solution**

The first solution is a series of professional development sessions developed by the TSSCC focusing on systemic racism awareness for administrators. Systemic racism awareness would allow for administrators to learn about the historical racism entrenched in our educational systems. Educators would learn about the intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous students, the middle-class White bias entrenched in progressive discipline approaches, the adaptive responses exhibited by racially marginalized students who experience racial trauma, and the impact of the lack of racial data collection on Black and Indigenous students (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020; Gregory et al, 2017; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; SMHO, 2020; Sue et al., 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014).

The acknowledgement of systemic barriers is a first step towards understanding racial biases and explicitly addressing policies and practices which are detrimental to Black and Indigenous students. This is particularly important for LDSB's predominantly White staff to learn (Board Document, 2019). Due to the racial composition of the staff, the awareness of

privilege in our educational policies and practices which disadvantage racialized students needs to be raised at the leadership level as many administrators have not experienced racism first-hand and may be unaware of their privilege or the extent of it (Codjoe, 2001; George et al., 2020; Kumashiro, 2000; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2014). An awareness of the extent of covert systemic racism entrenched in our educational practices must be encouraged in order for the administration to disrupt inequitable practices and systemic barriers (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mayor, 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). This would increase understanding of the vicarious racial trauma often experienced by Black and Indigenous students and raise awareness of racial microaggressions arising from unconscious biases and prejudices (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Sue et al., 2007).

These sessions would raise the consciousness of decision-making for administrators when using exclusionary discipline measures. This solution aligns well with the AO and CRT which seek to acknowledge the prevalence of systemic racism. Further, this solution seeks to counteract the societal notion that “race and racism have little to do with individual experiences and outcomes” (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019, p. 1076). Thirdly, the financial resources are available within the LDSB to run these professional development sessions, and the LDSB has the human resource expertise to conduct them. Fourthly, it is in keeping with *Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan* (2017) which mandates equity and inclusion training and engages Shields’ transformative leadership tenets. However, this series of workshops is too far-reaching in scope for this change initiative and for the agency of the TSSCC. Further, systemic racism awareness does not provide school administrators with specific tools to engage in anti-racist work. As such, while awareness of systemic racism, racial bias, and the impact of racial microaggressions is mandated through an

ethical obligation (Shields, 2018), and a very legitimate and necessary change initiative, this will not be chosen for the purpose of this OIP.

### **Second Solution**

The second solution is professional development workshops educating administrators in the use of a bias-free progressive discipline. These workshops are built on the premise that a true understanding of systemic racism is necessary to combat the power and privilege that permeates the LDSB. The current inequitable application of progressive discipline in the LDSB needs to be changed (Crosby et al., 2018; Gregory et al., 2017; Mayor, 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017; Shields & Mohan, 2010). In 2013, the Ontario Ministry of Education produced a document called *Supporting Bias-Free Progressive Discipline in Schools* (2013). This document was meant to guide administrators in their application of progressive discipline within a human rights context with a view towards equity. It acknowledged discriminatory barriers, systemic discrimination, and the issues of power and privilege. To date, I am unaware of any administrator in the LDSB who is aware of this document. As such, the introduction of workshops introducing bias-free progressive discipline is a solid second option for the PoP. Similar to my first solution, without an understanding of the impact of systemic racism and the resulting racial and vicarious trauma on Black and Indigenous students, LDSB administrators are ill-equipped to understand the traumatic symptoms and responses of this student population (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019). As such, legitimate and understandable adaptive responses become viewed as student choice to misbehave and oppose authority (Levinsky, 2016). Racial and vicarious trauma that often lead to disciplinary behaviour must be understood by administrators in order to use discipline through an equity lens (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; SMHO, 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).



When student responses are misunderstood and exclusionary discipline applied, Black and Indigenous students are further marginalized in a system that already marginalizes them. Without understanding how progressive discipline disadvantages marginalized students through an equity lens, LDSB administrators repeat the cycle and unintentionally continue systemic discrimination. This is witnessed by the application of progressive discipline which is resulting in Black and Indigenous students being twice as likely to be suspended or expelled (Crosby et al., 2018; George et al., 2020; Gregory et al., 2017; Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017; Sefa Dei, 2007; Winton, 2012; Wotherspoon, 2014).

Once again, this solution is attractive through the AO and CRT. When viewed through a CRT, this solution rejects the idea that individuals are responsible “for ameliorating systemic effects that should be handled institutionally” (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019, p. 1084). It also seeks to rectify an equity issue which is appealing through the transformative leadership tenets which necessitate a focus on equity and justice (Shields, 2018). This solution reinforces the principle of equity and acknowledges systemic barriers warranted by *Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan* (2017). Again, the LDSB has both the financial and human resources to undertake this change initiative. While this solution addresses the issue of disciplinary exclusion, it does not provide enough of a systemic shift in educational policies and practices to address a systemic issue. Indeed, much like the first solution, this solution raises awareness but does not give school administrators specific techniques and practices to confront the root issue. I find myself focused on looking at addressing the root of the problem before it escalates to disciplinary action in an administrator’s office. Therefore, a third solution will be discussed.

### **Third Solution**

The third solution, school administrator workshops on restorative justice and trauma-sensitive practices will be explored for the purposes of this OIP (Brunzell et al., 2019; Crosby et al, 2018; Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). Training in trauma-sensitivity would allow school administrators to focus on the motive of behaviour instead of viewing it as willful defiance (Levinsky, 2016; Souers & Hall, 2017) and respond appropriately (Honsinger & Brown, 2019). Training in restorative justice practices, focused on proactively building community to resolve conflict in a constructive way, would provide students with the ability to build positive relationships with peers and would allow educators to give students voice on issues of race and other aspects of diversity (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). This training would allow for the introduction of the concepts of racial trauma, racial microaggressions, and systemic racism, but would not be the sole focus. As punitive and exclusionary discipline have been found to be ineffective, the use of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practice concepts would give administrators a model through which to address the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). The envisioned state of equitable discipline for Black and Indigenous students would result from the entrenchment of restorative justice and trauma-sensitive practices. Further, administrators who have been trained in restorative justice and trauma-sensitive practices will then be able to share these strategies with their staff.

In my opinion, this solution does not go far enough to raise awareness of systemic racism. However, trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices aim to achieve a balance between individual and collective good by prioritizing true equity for community well-being (Green, 2017). This solution addresses the fact that the current application of progressive discipline maintains inequitable systems of power and privilege (Anthym & Tuit, 2019). To

varying degrees, some academics argue that the lack of trauma-sensitive training is a conscious effort by the systems of whiteness, neoliberalism, and governmentality to maintain an oppressive system that does not address the needs of marginalized students and continues systematic and cyclical exclusion (Mayor, 2018; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Specht, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Walter et al., 2006). By implementing professional learning about trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices, social justice can be achieved by equalizing opportunities for Black and Indigenous students, ensuring systematic barriers are acknowledged, and proactively supporting traumatized students in LDSB (Alisic, 2012; Brunzell et al., 2019; Chafouleas et al., 2016; Kumashiro, 2000; Perry & Daniels, 2016; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Specht, 2012). In short, trauma-sensitive and restorative practices implementation would result in the beginning of a healing process that is urgently needed. Without addressing the impact of racial trauma and raising awareness of systemic racism, LDSB administrators will continue to regard behaviour as choice (Levinsky, 2016; Souers & Hall, 2017). This solution would allow students to have a safe place in which to learn coping skills and improve their social skills, behaviour, and self-worth (Souers & Hall, 2017).

This solution addresses a social justice issue through a transformative leadership approach as it seeks to reconstruct knowledge frameworks (Shields, 2018). Additionally, this solution is congruent with the AO and CRT as it acknowledges the need to address power, privilege, and oppression embedded deeply in society, and the need to address this institutionally (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; George et al., 2020; Gorski, 2019; Sewell, 2016; Thompson, 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Furthermore, this solution addresses the need to treat race as a marginalizing factor at the system level (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; George et al., 2020). The LDSB has the economic and human resources needed for this change initiative. Indeed, trauma-

sensitive and restorative justice practices can only serve to improve the situation of Black and Indigenous students who will begin to feel included in the school community. Most importantly, it demonstrates an effort to work towards the human rights and equity of Black and Indigenous students as mandated in *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan* (2017). It is important to note that this approach is also beneficial to other segments of the population: low socio-economic students, LGBTQ+ students, other racialized students, and students on IEP (Brunzell, et al., 2019; McCormick, et al., 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015). This solution provides an opportunity to utilize the influence of the TSSCC and my agency and influence as a selected classroom teacher on the TSSCC. As a change facilitator, with an educational research background, I understand change processes and can help guide the TSSCC through issues that arise (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 27). As such, this option will be chosen as the change initiative for this OIP.

### **Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change**

Leadership ethics are important for any educational leader. However, they are especially poignant given that the PoP is an ethical one. This PoP discusses an issue of equity and exclusion which is rooted politically. The PoP brings to light systemic discrimination in disciplinary practices which clearly indicate an inequitable outcome for Black and Indigenous students (Gregory et al., 2017; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Winton, 2012; Wotherspoon, 2014). As the PoP is an issue of inequity, a social justice theory of ethics will be engaged (Shields, 2010). Counteracting systemic racism and neoliberalism, which create a system that perpetuates social inequalities by focusing on the maintenance of the status quo at the expense of ethical values (Apple, 2017; Green, 2016; Hursh & Martina, 2016; Mayor, 2018), will require a great deal of courage on my part and other stakeholders seeking change (Shields, 2018). Shields' (2018) tenets of transformative leadership, rooted in social justice ethics, will

serve as a touchstone for my ethical leadership. Further, as an ethical leader has an obligation to be “self-aware, self-reflective, and self-critical” (Bown et al., 2006, p. 5), the process of analyzing, reflecting, and critiquing my actions and assumptions within the change initiative, finding creative solutions to the PoP, and aligning those solutions with LDSB’s transformational mission and values will be fundamental (Board Website, 2021; Bown et al., 2006; Caldwell, 2010; Shields, 2010).

Having a strong ethical base rooted in self-awareness will allow me to consciously guide my actions on the TSSCC and remain focused on the envisioned future state (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). As a change facilitator on the TSSCC, I will use my “knowledge and interpersonal skills [to] provide change perspectives that will allow [administrators] to unfreeze their positions” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 28). Further, by examining my own privilege and bias as a White middle-class woman, I will demonstrate ethical leadership when implementing trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices within the LDSB. This will necessitate a journey of listening and learning from community stakeholders and members of marginalized groups. Further, by using self-reflection, I will acknowledge the need for critical and courageous conversations around my own privilege and power. This will require using the practice of reflexivity (Finlay, 2016).

For the purposes of this OIP, *reflexivity* is “defined as thoughtful, conscious self-awareness...recognizing how we actually construct our knowledge” (Finlay, 2016, p. 532). Finlay (2016) describes reflexivity as “an explicit, self-aware meta-analysis” (531) which “examine[s] the impact of the position, perspective, and presence of the researcher; promote[s] rich insight through examining personal responses and interpersonal dynamics; and empower[s] others by opening up a more racial consciousness” (p. 532). As a member of the majority, I must be very

careful to understand what experiences and lived realities I can and cannot speak to. As such, it will be necessary to advocate for all stakeholder voices to be represented within the TSSCC. It will be necessary, therefore, to position myself as an interested party who supports equitable treatment of Black and Indigenous students without presupposing full understanding of those lived realities. As an outsider discussing Black and Indigenous suspension and expulsion rates, I must be aware of how my lived experiences and historical background may influence and shape my interpretations of the PoP (Finlay, 2016). This self-awareness may prove both challenging and uncomfortable (Finlay, 2016). However, my reflexivity when coupled with my “high levels of self-awareness and emotional maturity” will allow me to be an effective change facilitator (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 27).

Understanding my ethical and social responsibility to change the disproportionate exclusion rates of Black and Indigenous students in the LDSB is essential to my chosen leadership approach- transformative leadership. The ethical base of the transformative leadership approach focuses on rectifying societal inequities and dismantling systems which disadvantage Black and Indigenous students (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018; Caldwell et al., 2012; Shields, 2010; Shields, 2018; van Oord, 2013). Hence, the utilization of Shields’ (2018) second tenet of transformative leadership which advocates for deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge frameworks which continue inequity will be mandated. As an ethical leader must serve the interests of students and their organization, I will use my social power as a change facilitator on the TSSCC to strive for an equitable learning experience for all students by working towards the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices with the transparent goal of achieving an equitable and inclusive educational experience for Black and Indigenous students (Sharma et al., 2018).

It will be necessary to utilize the transformative leadership approach to blend integrity and effectiveness in my ethical leadership and to prioritize the best interests of the students while understanding how actions impact them (Caldwell, 2010; Shields, 2018; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). This will necessitate engaging Shields' (2018) first tenet of transformative leadership which calls for deep and equitable change. A part of this will be challenging the notion of student choice which has permeated Ontario educational discipline policy since 2000 (Levinsky, 2016). Further, by unpacking the detrimental effect of grit and resilience talk, in favour of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices, change for Black and Indigenous student awareness will be cultivated (Gorski, 2016b; Mayor, 2018). Therefore, my ethical obligation to both current and future Black and Indigenous students is to work towards equitable disciplinary processes and practices which are inclusionary (Caldwell, 2010).

In keeping with Shields' (2018) eighth tenet of transformative leadership which calls for moral courage, the utilization of the AO and CRT throughout my OIP will require courage as many administrators in the LDSB have yet to become aware of the extent of power and privilege entrenched in our systems and practices (Caldwell, 2010). As the AO acknowledges the need to include previously excluded marginalized voices and remove educational barriers (Kumashiro, 2000; Sewell, 2016), I must work towards eradicating the inequitable treatment of, and lack of inclusive practices for, Black and Indigenous students. The current lack of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices being utilized is one example of a barrier to equitable and accessible education for Black and Indigenous students (Crosby et al., 2018; Gregory et al., 2017; Mayor, 2018).

Similar to the AO, the CRT argues that oppressive systems are deeply entrenched in society and that racism is pervasive and must be challenged (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; George et

al., 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Utilizing this framework acknowledges Shields' (2018) third tenet of transformative leadership addressing the inequitable distribution of power. Systemic issues can be witnessed with the current application of progressive discipline as it disadvantages many Black and Indigenous students (Gregory et al., 2017; Milne & Aurini, 2015). Stekovich & Begley (2007) tell us that it is crucial to understand "how easy it is to ignore the voices of those who literally have the most to lose" (p. 215). As such, the use of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices will allow for Black and Indigenous students to have a voice in their treatment. It is my contention that the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices will benefit all students and fulfill my ethical duty to balance multiple interests while ensuring true equity is achieved for Black and Indigenous students (Caldwell, 2010). This is also in line with Shields' (2018) fourth tenet which emphasizes individual and collective good.

Because the PoP brings to light an issue of racial marginalization, it is anticipated that some change recipients will resist the change initiative. As the majority of LDSB staff self-identify as White, many will not have experienced first-hand the effects of microaggressions, racial trauma, or marginalization (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Board Document, 2019; Sue et al., 2007). As such, respectful dialogue will be instrumental to addressing ethical concerns that arise throughout the change initiative. Building trust among stakeholders by cultivating relationships and demonstrating my own practice of reflexivity as a change facilitator on the TSSCC will be crucial to the success of this change initiative (Caldwell et al., 2010; Finlay, 2016). Trust will be built, and credibility maintained, in the eyes of followers by remaining self-aware and focused on the moral principles of the change initiative in the face of resistance (Finlay, 2016; Sharif & Scandura, 2013). Additionally, my leadership ethics and transformative leadership approach will



combine to encourage respectful dialogue about the PoP and the change initiative. Brave conversations counteracting the culture of power prevalent in our current educational systems and processes will require courage (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Caldwell, 2010; Shields, 2018). Listening to resistance, different perspectives, and viewpoints will allow for respect and trust in my leadership (Bown et al., 2006). Further, my willingness to acknowledge what I do not know will encourage others to do the same.

It will be essential to remain focused on the goal of equity and finding common ground with all stakeholders for the change initiative to move forward (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). As such, it is imperative that my focus as a leader is on the welfare of others, and not my own personal or professional success, as many conversations may deliver uncomfortable or unwelcome ideas (Caldwell, 2010; Finlay, 2016). Additionally, it will be necessary to emphasize, reinforce, and align the transformational mission and values of the LDSB and *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan* (2017) when working on the TSSCC (Board Website, 2021; Caldwell, 2010; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). As the LDSB strategic plan is centred around providing “an equitable and inclusive environment that champions learning opportunities for all” (Board Website, 2021), reference to this strategic plan will be utilized in order to galvanize ethical change.

In conclusion, as the PoP is centered on an ethical problem, a strong ethical leadership stance will be paramount to the change initiative's success. This will require a new level of self-awareness, reflection, and self-critique by me (Finlay, 2016). Shields' (2018) eight tenets of transformative leadership supported by the AO and CRT will guide my ethical leadership philosophy. These approaches and frameworks will allow me to have difficult and courageous conversations with stakeholders and change recipients who do not perceive a problem with the

status quo (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Maintaining focus on the envisioned goal of an equitable disciplinary policy for Indigenous and Black students, and the need for the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices to achieve that goal, will allow my leadership ethics a better chance of success to achieve the desired change.

### **Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication**

In this chapter, the CPM will be used to plan the change initiative by carefully outlining the actions to be taken at all four stages to implement trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices through the use of transformative leadership tenets utilizing the AO and CRT (Cawsey et al., 2016). This will be followed by a discussion of how the change process will be monitored and evaluated by the TSSCC and its subcommittees and how the Cawsey's four-stage Communication Plan will be incorporated throughout the CPM to bring about successful change (Cawsey et al., 2016). This chapter will conclude with a discussion of next steps for this OIP and future considerations.

#### **Change Implementation Plan**

The CPM incorporates four stages: awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization. At each stage, the TSSCC will conduct different actions which will be monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness. Specific actions, responsibilities, and target dates are further elaborated on in the Appendix. These actions will provide flexibility for the TSSCC to pivot to alternative strategies when necessary.

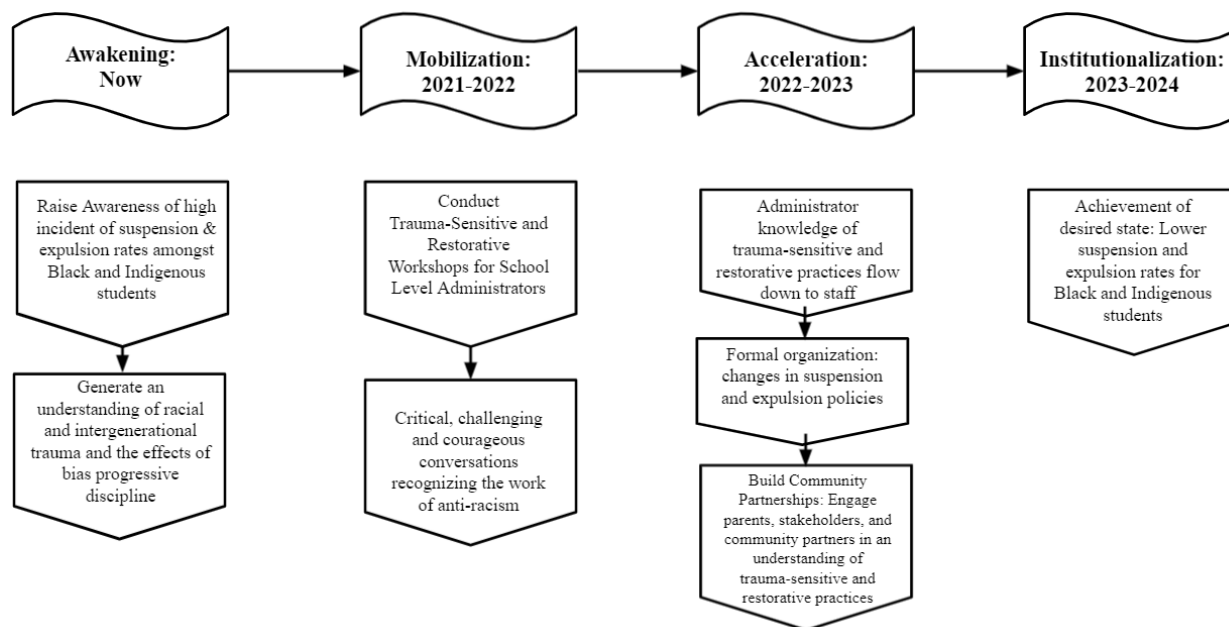
#### **Awakening**

The awakening stage has already begun in the LDSB at senior levels. Over the last year, inter board communication in the LDSB has had an increasing emphasis on equity. One focus of inter board communication has been efforts to increase awareness of inequitable discipline

practices imposed on marginalized communities. This indicates that there is a desire and readiness in the LDSB to see change in this area. Consequently, the PoP, disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students, is currently gaining awareness amongst the staff and school administrators in the LDSB. However, in order for knowledge frameworks to be reconstructed, there still needs to be raised awareness of the healing aspects of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices and the causes of disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates. The further work needed to communicate this awareness will be led by the TSSCC. It is also anticipated that this new awareness will result in the awakening to the crisis of an issue of equity in the LDSB. Hence, time must be taken during the awakening stage by the TSSCC to develop plans to ensure the change initiative's success (Cawsey et al., 2016).

To allow for proper planning, goals and a preliminary timeline at each stage of the CPM have been set as seen in Figure 5. These goals are meant to address the PoP through an AO and CRT which will be enacted using the transformative tenets (Shields, 2018). With the creation of the TSSCC, resources have been allocated to allow for the successful board-wide implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices (Kumashiro, 2000; Sewell, 2016). With the availability of funds, the TSSCC has been allowed the time to plan the successful implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices within the LDSB (Komives & Dugan, 2010; Shields, 2018).

As a change facilitator on the TSSCC, I will utilize my transformative leadership approach throughout the change initiative to bring about the change initiative's success (Cawsey et al., 2016; Shields, 2018). Due to my transformative leadership approach, rooted in the AO and CRT, I will utilize the research conducted in this OIP to advocate for the inclusion of representatives from Black and Indigenous communities on this Committee. I will utilize

**Figure 5***Change Implementation Model*

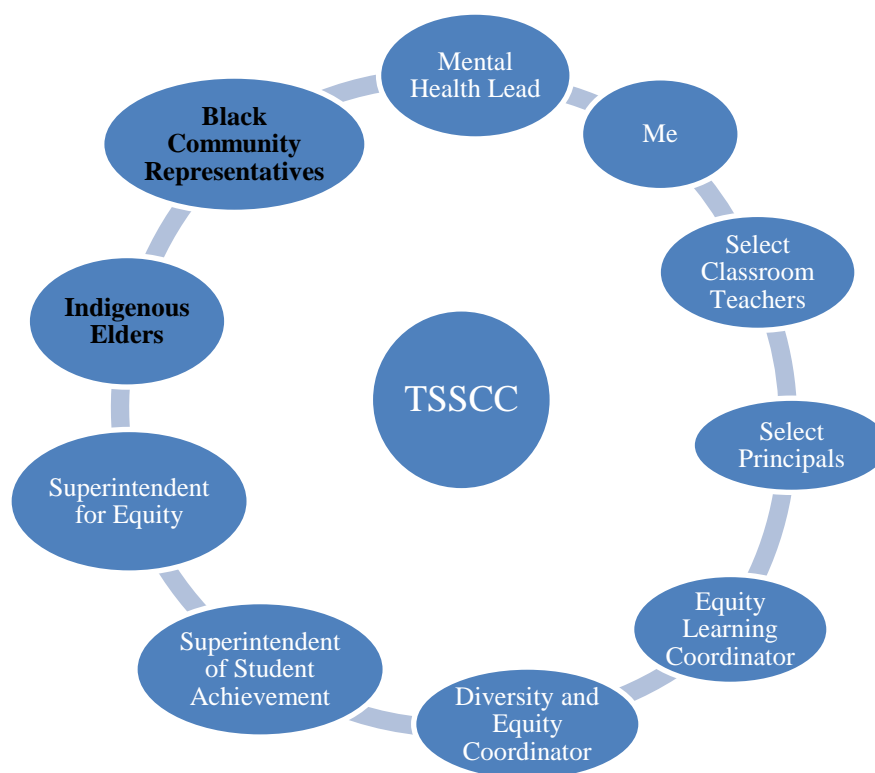
*Note.* Adapted from “The Change Path Model,” by Cawsey, T., Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T., 2016, *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*. (3rd ed.) SAGE. p. 55.

the transformative tenets of moral courage and addressing the inequitable distribution of power to ensure that Black and Indigenous representative voices are heard (Shields, 2018). The inclusion of elders from the Indigenous community, who will provide input and insight into how trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices will be received by the Indigenous community, will be invaluable. Further, representatives of Black community groups, such as the local chapter of Black Lives Matter, should be at the table as well. Representation on the TSSCC will be essential if we are truly committed to the work of anti-racism and inclusion. It is my hope that the diverse composition of the TSSCC will allow for an honest discussion of the current state of discipline practices from different perspectives and the development of approaches to implement trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices that are most likely to be well-received and

understood by school administrators. My proposed changes to the TSSCC membership are seen in Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6**

*Proposed Trauma-Sensitive Schools Change Committee (TSSCC) Membership*



The momentum that has been created by social movements such as Black Lives Matter and the disproportionate racialized mortality rates from COVID-19 serve as a starting point to have challenging and courageous conversations about the urgency of anti-racism initiatives (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Bowden, 2020; Pellow, 2016; Rajendra et al., 2020; SMHO, 2020). Additionally, these conversations need to engage a critical equity lens when looking at the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students. Raising awareness of the historical culture of entrenched racism in our educational institutions, and the

understandable trauma responses of children who are targets of that racism, is the first step towards staff learning about trauma and how trauma manifests in student adaptive responses often misunderstood as behaviour (Gorski, 2019; Thompson, 2020). There remains a great deal of work to do to raise awareness with respect to racial and intergenerational trauma, how that trauma manifests as what is misperceived as willful defiance, and the impact of progressive discipline on communities that are not based on middle-class White values. Indeed, no action can be taken on this PoP without taking into account systemic racism (Milne & Aurini, 2015; Thompson, 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

### **Mobilization**

The mobilization stage of the CPM will begin in the 2021-2022 school year. During this stage, workshops for school administrators will be conducted in October, December, February, and April of the 2021-2022 school year. The workshops will be conducted by our change leader, the LDSB Mental Health Lead, with the visible presence of our change implementers, senior administrators on the TSSCC. The workshops will focus on four different areas: (1) raising awareness of the problem of disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of marginalized groups, (2) introducing the tenets and concept of transformative leadership, (3) education on adaptive behaviours, and (4) implementing trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices.

The first section of these workshops will present statistical data, collected during the awakening stage (discussed further in the monitoring section), to school administrators, who are the change recipients, showing the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students. Referencing *Ontario's Education Equity Plan (2017)* which mandates professional development in terms of equity and inclusion will allow for the political justification of changing from current disciplinary practices. The disproportionate suspension and expulsion

rates of Black and Indigenous students, the aspects that have led to these high exclusionary rates, and the need for a holistic approach to student discipline will be discussed in these workshops (George et al., 2020; Gorski, 2019; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Thompson, 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Many LDSB administrators are unaware of the disadvantage marginalized students experience with current discipline practices (Milne & Aurini, 2015; Shields, 2018). Therefore, our Mental Health Lead will work with school administrators to develop an understanding of how current progressive discipline models achieve more favourable disciplinary outcomes for higher SES students and disadvantage marginalized students (Kumashiro, 2000; Milne & Aurini, 2015). By raising awareness of the assumptions of discussion-based discipline and how higher SES parents are able to better negotiate this model, administrators will begin to see why a shift from the current progressive discipline model is necessary (Milne & Aurini, 2015).

The second section of these workshops, in December 2021, will introduce the concept of transformative leadership. In this workshop, school administrators will learn about Shields' (2018) eight tenets of transformative leadership. By connecting this newfound concept of leadership to systemic inequities, change recipients will be challenged to see their leadership in the LDSB as pivotal to addressing systemic inequity. School administrators will begin to see that by advocating for the need for changes to current disciplinary practices in these workshops, they will be utilizing the transformative tenets of seeking deep and equitable change and challenging knowledge frameworks that maintain systemic inequity (Shields, 2018). Shifting school administrators' mindsets to a transformative leadership approach will be challenging. However, acceptance and adoption of these tenets by even a small group of school administrators will be the beginning of a significant philosophical shift in the LDSB. The introduction of Shields'

(2018) transformative tenets acknowledges the AO and CRT of this OIP as it allows for a leadership philosophy through which school administrators can begin to address the systemic nature of the PoP.

In February 2022, the third workshop will focus on adaptive responses. The discussion of racial inequity in our educational practices and transformative leadership tenets will lead to a discussion of adaptive responses of students who have experienced trauma and the need to reframe perspectives on perceived student misbehaviour as adaptive responses (Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Levinsky, 2016; Souers & Hall, 2017). In this workshop, our Mental Health Lead will introduce the concepts of racial, vicarious, and intergenerational trauma experienced by these groups (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Gorski, 2019; Thompson, 2020; Vinsky, 2018). This is important as the majority of our school administration identify as White and may not be familiar with these concepts (Board Document, 2019). By re-framing the conversation in terms of adaptive responses to trauma, administrators will be provided the opportunity to understand how trauma adaptations are often viewed as behaviour deserving of disciplinary action (Souers & Hall, 2017). Many LDSB administrators will struggle with the idea of moving away from student choice ideology which has been entrenched in Ontario's educational culture for the last twenty years (Levinsky, 2016). As such, it will be important for our Mental Health Lead to nurture a new understanding of why the behaviour is occurring and emphasizing that the connection amongst staff and the student population will benefit all educational stakeholders and the communities they serve (Thompson, 2020).

The goal of this workshop is to change the mindsets of school administrators from enacting consequences for behaviour to looking at the causes of said behaviour through a trauma-sensitive lens. The hope is that change recipients will begin to re-frame discipline



through an equity and transformative leadership lens (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Shields, 2018; SMHO, 2020; Thompson, 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). LDSB school administrators will leave this section of the workshop understanding they have a role to play in disrupting the cycle of systemic discrimination currently occurring in our education system.

The fourth workshop, to be held in April 2022, will be focused on the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices. The introduction of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices is a first step towards reconstructing knowledge frameworks as mandated by Shields' (2018) transformative tenets. Trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices encourage a re-thinking of progressive discipline practices and prioritize connection over correctional disciplinary measures (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). It will be necessary to make clear to all stakeholders that trauma-sensitive and restorative practices are also beneficial to low socio-economic students, LGBTQ+ students, other racialized students, and students on IEP (Brunzell et al., 2019; McCormick et al., 2018; Milne & Aurini, 2015).

In this workshop, administrators will be presented with studies which show that where trauma-sensitive and restorative practices were implemented, suspension and expulsion rates decreased due, in large part, to a decrease in office referrals (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). The case of the Toronto District School Board, where they were able to significantly lower suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students with administrator training on restorative practices, will be a powerful example of a way forward to begin addressing disproportionate disciplinary rates (TDSB, 2018). Indeed, change recipients will begin to see that many office referrals are students who often are exhibiting understandable traumatic responses which are misinterpreted by staff as purposeful misbehaviour and defiance of authority. As such, they will begin to see trauma-sensitive and restorative practices as a solution to the problem. By

providing school administrators with time throughout the 2021-2022 school year to become more aware of the systemic issues, they will be better prepared to implement trauma-sensitive and restorative practices in their buildings (Souers & Hall, 2017).

A significant challenge in these workshops will be that the subjects of discussion may be an uncomfortable journey for many school administrators. Time must be allowed for change recipients to process the entrenchment of racism in our educational institutions and society at their own pace (George et al., 2019). These workshops will allow time and space for school administrators to have conversations with one another about the work of anti-racism. The case will be made that maintenance of the status quo only serves to continue the diminishment of marginalized students (Caldwell et al., 2012; Gorski, 2019; Shields, 2018; Theoharis, 2007). The TSSCC, with the leadership of our Mental Health Lead, will work to maintain focus on the need to incorporate trauma-sensitive and restorative practices as an ethical issue. When viewing the problem as an issue of racism, many school administrators may come to realize that the problem is something systemic and not rooted in individual choice (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). This acknowledgement honours the AO and CRT utilized in this OIP. However, this awareness may also result in an increase in racial anxiety amongst the LDSB's predominantly White staff who will fear being called racists and/or will be concerned with being accused of being complicit in systemic racism (Board Document, 2019; Vinsky, 2018). It is expected that many change recipients may feel that acknowledgement of their privilege is an act of complicity and will resist acknowledgement of the anti-racist work needed here. The use of transformative tenets will be used to address this concern more in the communications section of this chapter.

## **Acceleration**

The acceleration stage of the CPM will commence in the 2022-2023 school year. In this stage, school administrators, who have received the first four workshops in the previous school year, will begin to put trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices in place in their homeschools. During this school year, administrators who have learned about trauma will begin to re-frame the conversations around disciplinary actions in terms of trauma-sensitive awareness (Souers & Hall, 2017). Raised awareness of the entrenchment of racist educational policies, the high incidence of trauma amongst marginalized groups, and the rectifying consequences of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices will be the impetus driving school administration. This, again, utilizes the transformative leadership tenet of identifying the symptoms and roots of the problem (Shields, 2018). Further, this acknowledges the AO and CRT which contend that systemic racism is covertly entrenched in current discipline policies and practices (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Gorski, 2019; van Oord, 2013). It is anticipated that school administrators will encounter great resistance during the acceleration stage from students, parents, teachers, and union partners as they move away from the student choice ideology towards a model that allows students to remain in school after exhibiting behaviour that has traditionally led to exclusionary discipline actions (Levinsky, 2016; Vinsky, 2018).

The introduction of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices amounts to a revolution in education. When framing the problem through a CRT informed approach which argues that racism is highly adaptable (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019), this new awareness amongst educational stakeholders may not lead to empathy but rather to the reinvention of existing racist frameworks to continue the current constructions of privilege (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). In fact, when

viewed through a transformative leadership lens that necessitates deep and equitable change, the introduction of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices will be an uphill battle (Shields, 2018).

Utilizing my agency as a change facilitator on the TSSCC, we will provide a safe forum for administrators to discuss their feelings about the shift in disciplinary procedures and collaboratively problem-solve obstacles. I, as a change facilitator, and other TSSCC change facilitators will use our interpersonal skills and knowledge of trauma-sensitive practices, restorative justice practices, and self-awareness to allow change recipients a safe place to voice concerns and talk about challenges (Cawsey et al., 2016). At this stage of the change initiative, my knowledge and research from this OIP will be used to adapt to both unanticipated and anticipated reactions by change recipients to the change initiative. Additionally, school administrators will receive ongoing trauma-sensitive and restorative justice workshops throughout the 2022-2023 school. As change initiators need to be provided with support while adapting to changes, these ongoing workshops will provide an opportunity for school administrators to emotionally support one another throughout the change initiative (Cawsey et al., 2016). The workshops during the acceleration stage will continually emphasize the ethical imperative and systemic implications of implementing trauma-sensitive and restorative practices in their buildings (Thompson, 2020). Additionally, the ongoing workshops for school administrators will allow them to be continually reminded of the reasons for change and their fundamental role in the process (Thompson, 2020; Vinsky, 2018).

This change initiative cannot be successful without the support of upper-level administration. In addition to the workshops, superintendents will reinforce the importance of the work of anti-racism in their monthly meetings with school administrators. This will provide school administrators an alternative forum to have ongoing dialogue about the practical

application of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices. Upper-level administration will reinforce and support the need for school administrators to incorporate trauma-sensitive and restorative practices. The combined support of upper administration and the TSSCC will allow change recipients to have the strong professional and emotional support they need to maintain momentum forward with the change initiative and not become discouraged.

The TSSCC will also be involved in making trauma-sensitive and restorative practice training materials and personnel available to school administrators in order to engage in staff professional development within their own buildings. Having classroom and specialist teachers informed about the why and how of the discipline changes will allow for some of the resistance encountered by the administration to be minimized (Thompson, 2020). School staff's raised consciousness of the aspects that lead to inequitable suspension and expulsion rates for marginalized students is key to embracing and implementing trauma-sensitive and restorative practices (Gorski, 2019; Thompson, 2020). Given the momentum created by the Black Lives Matter Movement and the transformative tenet of balancing critique with promise, the work of anti-racism should be emphasized to all educational stakeholders framing trauma-sensitive and restorative practices as a way forward to addressing systemic racism in our educational institutions (Pellow, 2016; Shields, 2018).

This change initiative will require significant flexibility, innovation, and agile thinking on the part of the TSSCC to choose and implement supports on a school-by-school basis (Kotter, 2012). This will allow administrators much needed support to continue advocating within their buildings for changes in discipline application. Staff will be empowered to engage in the change process by exposure to Shield's (2018) transformative leadership tenet which calls for moral courage. They will be encouraged to raise their self-awareness by examining their own bias,

privilege, and blind spots (Komives & Dugan, 2010; Vinsky, 2018). This self-awareness will allow school administrators to remain authentic and systematic as they attempt to effect sustainable and successful change. With the goal of an equitable learning environment for marginalized students, trauma-sensitive and restorative practice initiatives will be framed as a first step towards combating current inequitable policies (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Shields, 2018; Theoharis, 2007).

School administrators, with the support of upper administration and the TSSCC, will need to engage community stakeholders in the process to raise awareness of the necessity of change. Similar to school staff, the change in disciplinary policies will also require a community shift in mindset. Many community members may not understand the philosophy behind the changes. As such, there may be a desire to maintain current structures that privilege the majority (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019). The utilization of a transformative leadership philosophy will allow for respectful dialogue to occur with the aim of counteracting the culture of power prevalent in the LDSB and achieve support for the change initiative (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Shields, 2018).

This dialogue will take place in Trustee-Parent meetings and through input from the Parent Advisory Committee. Conversations with a variety of stakeholders will allow for the active participation and self-discovery of different stakeholders, and therefore, genuine buy-in to the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; van Oord, 2013). Of particular importance here is the inclusion of Indigenous elders and Black community representatives on the TSSCC. Their visible inclusion will help to quell some of the community anxiety about the changes to disciplinary practices. However, representation on the TSSCC is not enough. By allowing for parent input in Trustee meetings and the Parent Advisory Committee, the disciplinary changes and why they are occurring will be transparent to

community stakeholders. This involvement will continue to raise systemic awareness of the need for change and involve more stakeholders in ownership of the process (Cawsey et al., 2016). By engaging stakeholders in conversations where the desired outcomes are clear, the stakeholders' perspectives and reasons for supporting or resisting the change can be assessed (Cawsey et al., 2016). To be sure, the different perspectives gained from the resistance to change may offer alternative possibilities to the change initiative's strategies (Cawsey et al., 2016). This will provide directional guidance for the TSSCC to engage more stakeholders (Cawsey et al., 2016).

### **Institutionalization**

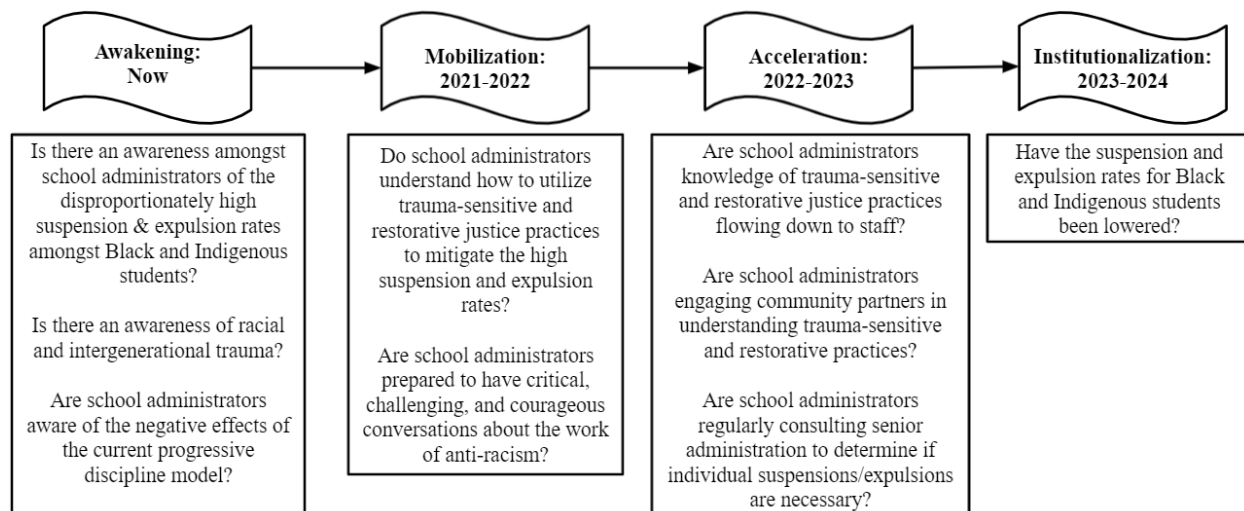
The institutionalization stage of the CPM is expected to be achieved during the 2023-2024 school year. At this stage, trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices will be regularly used by all LDSB school administrators. The achievement of the desired future state of lower suspension and expulsion rates for Black and Indigenous students, reflected in our statistical data collection, will reinforce the successful momentum of the change initiative and counteract naysayers who believe the proposed practices will be ineffectual (Thompson, 2020). This understanding will allow for trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices to be fully incorporated and enable equity-minded educators to honour student voices on issues of race and other aspects of diversity (Gorski, 2019; Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). As students feel more valued and engaged, as they see that their presence is valued, teachers and administrators will be able to focus on students available for learning as they will be in class and not at home. In turn, this will create a more positive relationship with the community stakeholders who will see tangible moves forward in terms of inclusivity, equity, and addressing racism (Thompson, 2020).

## Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

For the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the change initiative, monitoring and evaluation questions, monitoring tasks, and evaluation by our sub-committees reporting back to the TSSCC will occur. These subcommittees will be composed of two of the TSSCC’s change implementers. Reporting to the TSSCC from the monitoring component of the change initiative will be conducted by our Soft Data and Data Analysis Sub-Committees. The Soft Data Sub-Committee will be composed of our two Equity Coordinators. Our Data Analysis Sub-Committee will be led by our Mental Health Lead. By monitoring and evaluating at each stage of the CPM, the TSSCC will be guided by the monitoring and evaluation questions laid out in Figure 7.

**Figure 7**

### *Monitoring and Evaluating Questions*



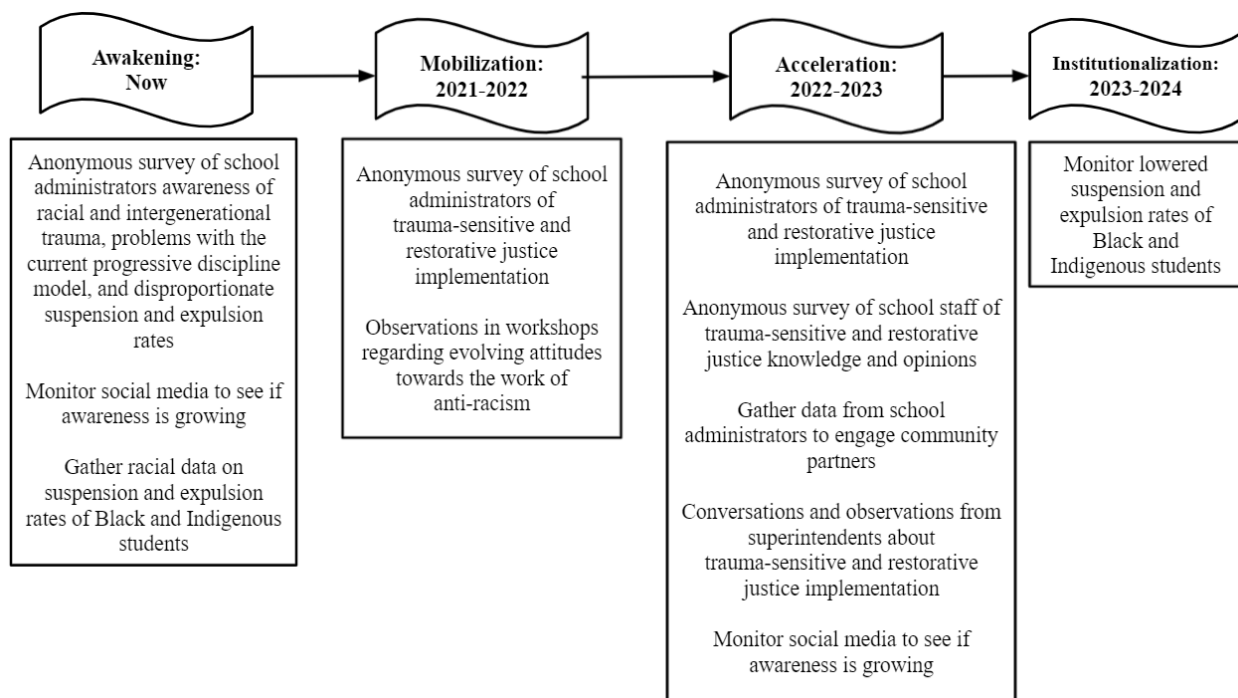
*Note.* Adapted from “The Change Path Model,” by Cawsey, T., Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T., 2016, *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*. (3rd ed.) SAGE. p. 55.

For the purposes of this OIP, *monitoring* will be defined as tracking progress of the change initiative using performance indicators (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Monitoring will be



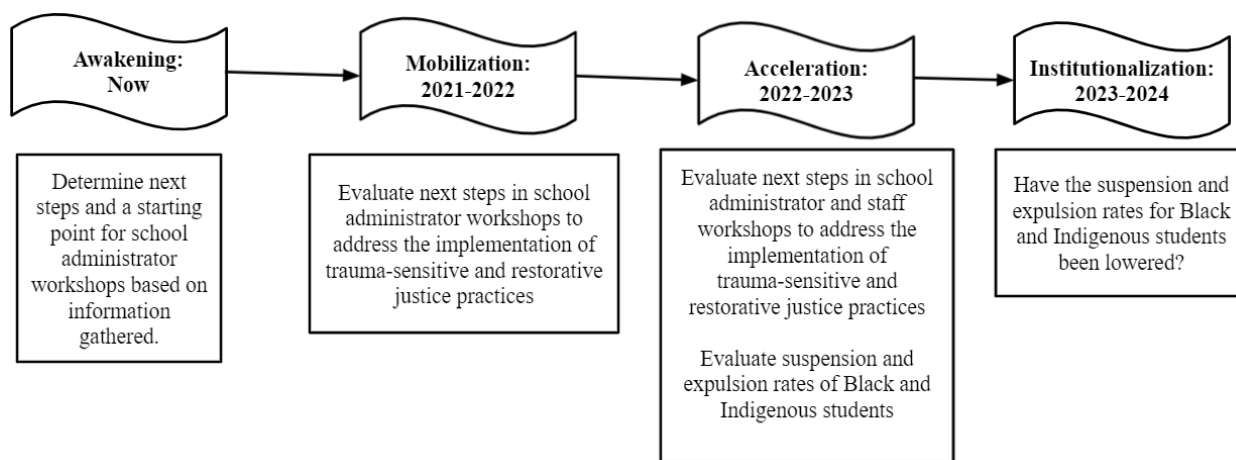
used to track the change initiative's successful implementation and progress while ensuring that corrective action is taken to pivot to new strategies as needed and ensure successful change delivery (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Each phase of the CPM will have a different focus constructed from the Monitoring and Evaluating Questions in Figure 7. The monitoring tasks will be guided by the collection of data to answer the Monitoring and Evaluating questions. The monitoring tasks for change implementation, laid out in Figure 8, gather qualitative data which will provide early indicators of the change initiative's success and reactions of stakeholders. This data will be further analyzed in the evaluation stage. The Sub-Committee's reports will help guide the TSSCC to determine the next steps as the CPM progresses (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The TSSCC will need to adjust school administrator workshops, community information, and school-based support throughout the mobilization and acceleration phases based upon information gathered during the monitoring stage. Markiewicz & Patrick (2016) note that there is a connection and overlap of the evaluating and monitoring stages when tracking program implementation. This is certainly the case in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices.

For the purposes of this OIP, *evaluation* will be defined as assessing the change initiative's success (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Evaluation during the CPM implementation will allow for measurement of the quality, value, and success of the change initiative (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Evaluating change initiatives designed to address social problems is challenging given the abundance of variables (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). For this purpose, monitoring of results, while allowing for information to guide the change initiative, must be evaluated to gain an understanding of whether the change initiative's goals are being met and if there has been a system shift in mindset towards trauma-sensitive and restorative justice

**Figure 8***Monitoring Tasks for Change Implementation*

*Note.* Adapted from “The Change Path Model,” by Cawsey, T., Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T., 2016, *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*. (3rd ed.) SAGE. p. 55.

practices (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The evaluation of the data gathered during the monitoring stages will allow the TSSCC to determine if trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices are having the desired result of lowering suspension and expulsion rates, what is working well, and what is not (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). As a change facilitator, my research and planning in this OIP will help me contribute valuable suggestions for adjustments to the change initiative to our change leader, and the TSSCC as a whole, based upon the analysis from the evaluation stage. The information gathered during the monitoring stage combined with quantitative data showing changes in Black and Indigenous suspension and expulsion rates will allow for evaluative conclusions to be drawn about the progress of the change initiative (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This will be guided by the criteria laid out in Figure 9.

**Figure 9***Evaluating Change Implementation*

*Note.* Adapted from “The Change Path Model,” by Cawsey, T., Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T., 2016, *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*. (3rd ed.) SAGE. p. 55.

**Awakening**

The awakening stage of the CPM is imperative to the change initiative’s success and has been occurring throughout the 2020-2021 school year. Online surveys can be a very effective way to gather information about awareness of the issues and opinions (Cawsey et al., 2016). The TSSCC will need to conduct intensive surveys of internal stakeholders’ views of the PoP. The Soft Data Sub-Committee will analyze the results of an anonymous survey of school administrators’ awareness of trauma, awareness of the problems with the current progressive discipline model, and awareness of disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates for marginalized communities. Monitoring and evaluating this qualitative data will be difficult. As such, the Soft Data Sub-Committee will compare surveys from one stage to the next to gauge if mindsets are changing.

At the same time, our Data Analysis Sub-Committee will be involved in collecting data of suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students in the 2020-2021 school year

by connecting the data of those that self-identified with exclusionary discipline. Currently in the LDSB, administrators are presented with American or TDSB demographic data to illustrate the problem of Black and Indigenous student suspension and expulsion. It is too easy for LDSB administrators and staff to label this data as a “Toronto” or “American” problem instead of acknowledging that it is occurring in our own organization. As administrators are trained to gather and analyze data, without tangible proof of disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates, fixing the problem becomes an issue. Indeed, the Director’s contention of disproportionate Black and Indigenous suspension becomes debatable without any statistical data (Rivers, 2020). Hence, the lack of race-based data collection on Black and Indigenous student suspension and expulsion rates is creating an inequitable environment to prove the existence of disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates in the LDSB (George et al., 2020).

The TSSCC will use this data to conduct an analysis of exclusionary discipline practices. In truth, it is the hope that implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices backed by statistical data collection within the LDSB will mobilize reforms (Hanson & Lang, 2016; Mcluckie et al., 2014). The initial evaluation of suspension and expulsion data will serve as a quantitative tracker and baseline study of the change initiative’s success (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The combination of these monitoring strategies will allow the TSSCC to determine a starting point for school administrator workshops to commence in the mobilization stage beginning in October 2021. The statistical data collected will be used throughout the change initiative as a quantitative measuring tool to measure whether trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices are having the desired effect of lowering suspension and expulsion rates. The qualitative data will allow the TSSCC to evaluate school administrators’ readiness for

change, awareness of the issues, and understand their priorities for addressing issues in their buildings.

### **Mobilization**

In the mobilization phase of the CPM, to occur in the 2021-2022 school year, the four workshops for school administrators, conducted by our change leader with the presence and support of our change implementers, will allow for administrators to understand the reasons behind the LDSB emphasis on the need to implement trauma-sensitive and restorative practices in their buildings. The monitoring at this stage will be conducted in two parts. First, the creation of courageous spaces in these workshops will allow for genuine conversations about an issue of social justice, to gauge changing views and opinions of school administrators, and to minimize the reactions of resistance and denial (Arao & Clemens, 2013). (More about brave spaces will be discussed in the communications section.) This is essential as program implementation can have unexpected developments, and the TSSCC will need to maintain a watchful eye on unanticipated reactions to the change initiative and to encourage authentic learning (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

As these conversations occur, the Mental Health Lead and senior administrators present in the workshops will be able to monitor the changing attitudes regarding school administrators' views on the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates, transformative leadership tenets, adaptive responses, and trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices. It is anticipated that many administrators may be reluctant to shift to a disciplinary model that may seem uncomfortable and foreign. The TSSCC change leader, our Mental Health Lead, will need to repeatedly make the connection between the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices and lowered suspension rates. By emphasizing the moral imperative to change,

change recipients' reluctance will decrease. Secondly, at the conclusion of each workshop, school administrators will be asked to complete an anonymous survey which will allow the TSSCC to gauge the understanding and acceptance of new disciplinary practices (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). These surveys will allow change recipients to voice concerns and questions which they are reluctant to in a group setting. The anonymity of these surveys is paramount as our school administrators are predominantly White and may react to a challenge to their worldview (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Board Document, 2019). The fear of being labeled a racist, if not adopting trauma-sensitive and restorative practices framed in an anti-racist context, will be mitigated by the use of anonymous surveys (Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Vinsky, 2018).

During the mobilization stage, the evaluation of the information gathered in anonymous surveys and observations in the workshops will be conducted by our Soft Data Sub-Committee to assess if the program is meeting its objective to change mindsets and raise awareness (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This data will allow the TSSCC to adjust our approaches and pivot to additional supports necessary to ensure the change initiative's success (Cawsey et al., 2016). Once again, as a change facilitator, my research and planning in this OIP, will allow me to use my knowledge of change processes to work through issues and provide alternative approaches (Cawsey et al., 2016). Further, this data will help the TSSCC gauge the progress of the transformative work of deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge frameworks (Shields, 2018).

### **Acceleration**

As the change initiative moves forward, the acceleration phase of the CPM will increase in the number of aspects of the change initiative being monitored (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). In this stage, four different aspects will be monitored. First, the success of ongoing school

administrator workshops during the 2022-2023 school year will be monitored by anonymous surveys gauging the acceptance of these new practices by school administrators. Successful workshops will show an understanding of and appreciation for trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices and the work of anti-racism by school administrators. This will allow for the active engagement of the change recipients in honest and brave conversations to find creative ways to improve the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices in their schools and maintain forward momentum (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Arao & Clemens, 2013; van Oord, 2013). As such, these workshops will allow for regular check-ins with school administration to gauge success and maintain focus on the board priority of implementing trauma-sensitive and restorative practices. It will also provide an opportunity for the TSSCC to celebrate early achievements with change recipients in the change initiative (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

Secondly, as school administrators return to their homeschools to begin putting these disciplinary changes in place, the Soft Data Sub-Committee will monitor the acceptance of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices by anonymous staff surveys. Similar to the school administrator surveys, it will be necessary for the TSSCC to monitor changing staff attitudes towards trauma-sensitive and restorative practices. Given the size and geographic boundaries of the LDSB, paired with the predominantly White composition of our staff, this is best done by anonymous surveys (Board Document, 2019). Significant effort by the TSSCC will be required during this stage to support staff professional development on trauma-sensitive and restorative practices. The extent of this support will be guided, to some extent, by the results of anonymous staff surveys conducted in the midstream communication phase to be discussed in the next section. Professional development for staff will be needed to start shifting mindsets away from the concept of student choice towards an understanding of adaptive behaviour

(Honsinger & Brown, 2019; Levinsky, 2016). It will be essential for the TSSCC to have feedback regarding the opinions of stakeholders about the change initiative in order for the TSSCC to adjust focus on areas of need (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Thirdly, school administrators will begin to engage community partners on a large scale during the acceleration stage. School administrators and the TSSCC will work together at this stage to reach out to community partners to explain the purpose of the disciplinary policy changes. This will also include a presence of representatives from the TSSCC when the Parent Advisory Committee is delivering input. It will be important for Black and Indigenous communities to see that anti-racism work is finally occurring in our educational systems and that the lived realities of marginalized communities are being acknowledged. The involvement of community partners in the school context will be monitored by school administrators submitting data to their superintendents of actions that have been taken to engage community partners. The inclusion of representatives from Black and Indigenous communities on the TSSCC will be essential for marginalized communities to understand that they have a voice and representation in the change initiative.

Finally, the monitoring of consultations with superintendents about their observations of school administrators' acceptance of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices will be conducted by our Soft Data Sub-Committee. Superintendents, who need to be consulted before second suspensions take place, will be a valuable source of information. Superintendents will also be able to gauge if school administrators' consultations about suspensions and expulsions are a response to navigating this new approach to discipline or a result of resisting the changes. Hence, superintendents will be able to indicate school administrators who need additional help,



support, or coaching in the new practices which will allow the TSSCC to concentrate focus and energy on school administrator outliers.

The data gathered in the monitoring stage will be used to evaluate the results of the change initiative in during the acceleration stage (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The monitoring of the soft data will be conducted by our Soft Data Sub-Committee, composed of the Equity Coordinators, and reporting to the TSSCC. This data will be key to assessing if the transformative goal of changing existing knowledge frameworks is meeting with success (Shields, 2018). The Soft Data Sub-Committee will need to exercise judgment in weighing the qualitative data to determine if the criteria established in Figure 9 is being achieved (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This evaluation will also identify positive and negative consequences of the program implementation (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Finally, for the purposes of evaluating the acceleration stage, our Data Analysis Sub-Committee will use quantitative data to evaluate suspension and expulsion data by race and connect that data to our baseline study (Cawsey et al., 2016; Levinsky, 2016; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016; Thompson, 2020). This will allow for the TSSCC, as a whole, to use statistical data to measure the improvement, or lack of improvement, in suspensions and expulsions of Black and Indigenous students. It will also allow for the TSSCC to see if restorative justice practices are actually being utilized on a school-by-school basis. If trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices are being actively engaged, the number of suspensions and expulsions will decrease. This bi-monthly process will serve as a summative evaluation to gauge the effectiveness of the change initiative and determine if a change in approach is necessary (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

These evaluations will utilize a mixed method approach combining both qualitative and quantitative data to measure the ongoing success of the change initiative and offer depth to the

analysis of that data (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This mixed-methods approach has been chosen in order to identify things that are working well, things that are not, and to learn from those successes and failures moving forward (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This evaluation will be predicated on the Evaluating Change Implementation criteria outlined in Figure 9 for this stage.

### **Institutionalization**

The final stage of the CPM, institutionalization in the 2023-2024 school year, is when data, observations, and conversations will be analyzed by the TSSCC to conclude whether the desired future state- lowered suspension and expulsion rates for Black and Indigenous students- has been achieved by the introduction of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices. It is expected that these numbers will lower incrementally throughout the acceleration stage. As creating deep and equitable change is a long-reaching goal, trauma-sensitive and restorative practice implementation is a first, but necessary, step towards rectifying the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students in the LDSB.

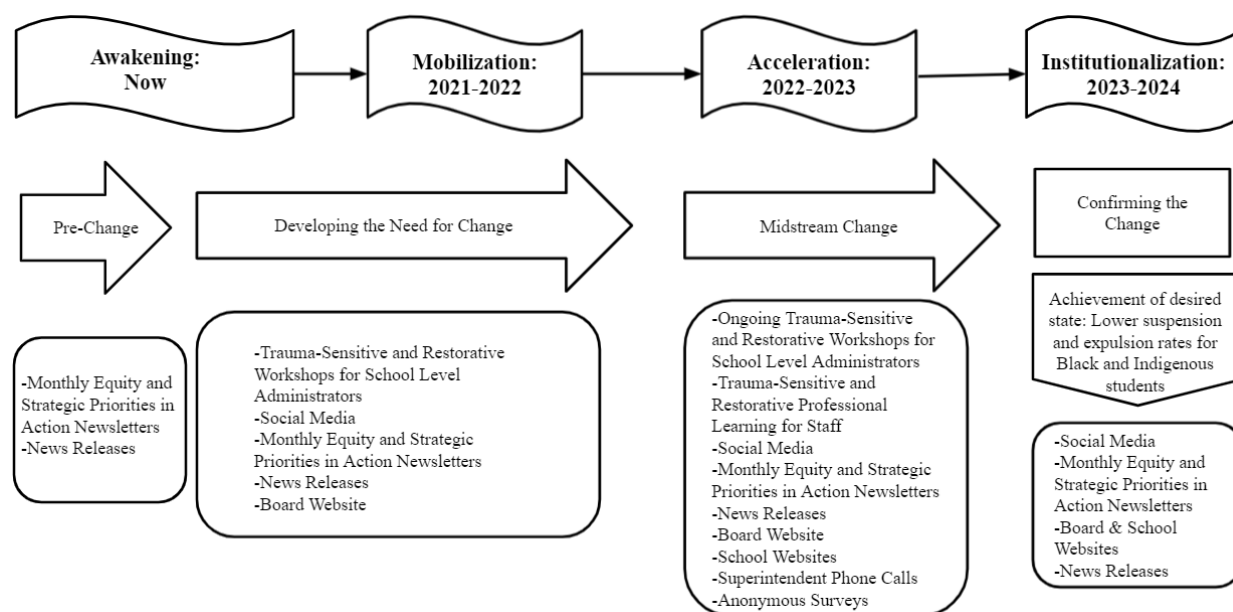
### **Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process**

A strong communication plan is paramount for creating support for the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices and sustaining all LDSB stakeholders' commitment throughout the change initiative (Cawsey et al., 2016). Cawsey (2016) tells us that a communication strategy has four goals: (1) to create the need for change in the organization, (2) to encourage stakeholders' understanding of the ways change will affect them, (3) to communicate how changes will impact their jobs and the organization, and (4) to keep stakeholders abreast of the change initiative's progression. For the purposes of this change initiative, Cawsey et al.'s (2016) four-phase Communication Plan will be utilized. Its stages are

the pre-change phase, the developing the need for change phase, the midstream change phase, and the confirming the change phase as laid out in Figure 10 (Cawsey et al., 2016). As the CPM progresses, the communication plan will shift from low-intensity to high-intensity forms of communication (Cawsey et al., 2016). Low-intensity forms of communication will be used at the beginning of the communication model when information will be delivered generally through social media and LDSB newsletters. As the communication model progresses, additional communication mediums will be added and more individual communication will occur resulting in higher-intensity communication. This can be seen in the communication model featured in Figure 10.

**Figure 10**

*Communication Model*



*Note.* Adapted from “The Change Path Model” and “Communication Needs for Different Phases in the Change Process,” by Cawsey, T., Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T., 2016, *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*. (3rd ed.) SAGE. p. 55, 321.

My transformative leadership and my agency as a change facilitator on the TSSCC will be used throughout all communication phases to deconstruct current knowledge frameworks in favour of new knowledge frameworks which seek to address inequity (Shields, 2018). As such, the use of multiple media forms is meant to increase the opportunities for educators to retain the message that trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices, not only address disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates, but are good teaching practices for all students (Cawsey et al., 2016). Further, the mobilization to create change will be accomplished by the TSSCC using multiple communication channels to articulate a desired future state through a gap analysis (Cawsey et al., 2016). This communication is meant to help educators “develop an understanding of the change initiative, what is required of them, and why it is important” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 324). As many change agents believe that 15-20 repetitions of a change message are necessary to communicate effectively (Cawsey et al., 2016), the TSSCC will use a mixture of internal and external communication tools to raise awareness. The communication will be carried out methodically throughout the CPM to ensure clarity for all stakeholders of the change initiative’s goal (Kotter, 2012). The responsibilities at each stage of the communication plan are laid out in the Appendix.

### **Prechange Phase**

The prechange phase requires convincing senior management in the LDSB of the necessity for change linked to organizational goals and priorities (Cawsey et al., 2016). The awareness and necessity for change regarding the high suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students is currently occurring at the Director’s level of our board. He is, in fact, the change initiator for the creation of the TSSCC. The advocacy of our more senior members of the TSSCC, utilizing their connections within the LDSB, will ensure that the disproportionate

suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students continue to be part of the conversation of dismantling systemic racism (McCallum & O'Connell, 2009). As this topic is already appearing in inter board communication, the prechange phase, which requires convincing senior management of the need for change, is almost complete.

### **Developing the Need for Change Phase**

We are currently entering into the developing the need for change phase of our communication plan. This aligns with the latter part of the awakening stage and the beginning of the mobilization stage of the CPM. The TSSCC will use multiple communication channels to raise awareness board-wide of the PoP. This is necessary to convince all stakeholders of the urgency of the change (Cawsey et al., 2016). Inter board communication will continue to be delivered in three forms. First, our monthly *Equity Newsletter*, produced by two of our change implementers, the Equity Learning Coordinator and Diversity and Equity Coordinator, will raise awareness of the issues of trauma and the racial inequity of our current disciplinary policies amongst the LDSB staff. Secondly, the *Strategic Priorities in Action Newsletter*, containing information from our Equity Learning Coordinator and our Diversity and Equity Coordinator, will continue to raise awareness with internal LDSB stakeholders of the need for trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices. Thirdly, the board website will begin to post information featuring lowering the suspension and expulsion rates as a strategic priority.

These communication forms will be supported by the statistical racial data being collected this year and available in the Fall of 2021. This data will be compared to the results of other Ontario boards, namely the TDSB, who have implemented trauma-sensitive and restorative practices to raise awareness of the issue and the solution championed by this OIP (Cawsey et al., 2016; TDSB, 2018). Further, these communication channels will articulate a clear and

compelling desired future state- where every student, regardless of race, is treated equitably by discipline policies (Cawsey et al., 2016). It is hoped that resonance with educators will be created by framing the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices as an issue of equity (Cawsey et al., 2016).

External communication will center on creating an awareness of the PoP, education about trauma-sensitive and restorative practices, and how these new practices address the problem (Cawsey et al., 2016). All communication during this phase will utilize the transformative tenet of how trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices serve both the individual student and collective good of our communities (Shields, 2018). News releases, by the Director and Superintendent of Equity, will continue to raise awareness of the issue of disproportionate suspensions and expulsions and indicate that a need for change in the status quo is acknowledged and necessary. The use of social media, namely Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, will play a pivotal role in raising community and staff awareness of the PoP (Cawsey et al., 2016). The change leader, change initiator, change implementers, and change facilitators of the TSSCC will play a role in posting on social media.

In the later part of developing the need for change phase, throughout the 2021-2022 school year, the TSSCC will begin school administrator workshops, led by our Mental Health Lead, to introduce trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices. The face-to-face communication, utilized by our change leader during these workshops, is anticipated to have a powerful effect on the change recipients (Cawsey et al., 2016). This is particularly valuable as the issue of disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of racialized students may be an emotionally charged issue for many school administrators (Cawsey et al., 2016; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Further, change recipients may find the idea that our educational systems have

entrenched racism disturbing (George et al., 2020). The face-to-face method provided by these workshops will allow school administrators to understand that they are part of a solution for addressing systemic racism, not targets of accusations (Cawsey et al., 2016).

These workshops will utilize the concept of brave spaces, a concept that moves away from the idea of safe spaces, to explore content that challenges comfort levels in order to increase learning (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Brave spaces will allow change recipients to interact authentically when engaging in challenging conversations about power, privilege, and oppression (Arao & Clemens, 2013). These workshops, and their use of brave spaces, will increase the chances of genuine dialogue and school administrators becoming involved and invested in the change initiative (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Cawsey et al., 2016) This will also decrease the chances of miscommunication around the reasons for the change initiative implementation (Cawsey et al., 2016). Discussion rooted in the transformative tenets of equitable change, reconstructing knowledge frameworks, equity, and moral courage will allow school administrators to have input into the mobilization of the changes (Shields, 2018).

### **Midstream Change Phase**

During the midstream phase of the communication model, which aligns with the acceleration CPM stage, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, a combination of low-intensity and high-intensity forms of communication will be used. While the low-intensity communication forms utilized during the prechange and developing the need for change phases will continue, staff workshops, school websites, and phone calls will increase the intensity and frequency in which information is being delivered. In the midstream communication phase, ongoing school administrator workshops will allow for continuous two-way communication between change recipients and the TSSCC's change leader and change implementers (Cawsey et al., 2016). As

there is often an absence of two-way communication and a lack of listening during change initiative implementation, the use of anonymous surveys of school administrators, analyzed by our Soft Data Sub-Committee, will once again provide the TSSCC with valuable information to adapt our strategies (Cawsey et al., 2016). Indeed, this gathering of information on changing attitudes and mindsets will be imperative as those on the TSSCC will be ahead of the learning curve from the change recipients (Cawsey et al., 2016). Hence, gauging change recipients' responses to the new disciplinary practices, entrenched racism in our educational institutions, and the acceptance of transformative leadership tenets will allow for informed strategies to be developed by the TSSCC (Cawsey et al., 2016). Once again, the transformative tenet of addressing inequitable power distributions will be utilized here as the two-way communication will allow school administrators to have a voice in how the change initiative is being administered as opposed to just being told by the board office (Shields, 2018).

This is particularly important as convincing change recipients of the moral imperative of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices implementation will be necessary in order for them to convince their homeschool staff. As many school staff will look to their administrators for guidance and direction, school administrators must be able to go back to their homeschools and authentically advocate for the necessity of the change initiative (Cawsey et al., 2016). Furthermore, by using the conversations that occur in these workshops, the TSSCC can identify change leaders amongst the school administration who may be critical to convincing others (Cawsey et al., 2016). Likewise, outliers can be identified and the TSSCC can increase support and focus on them in order to proactively engage resistance to the initiative (Cawsey et al., 2016). By listening to feedback, strategy adjustments to the change initiative will help to reduce



resistance and expedite the desired future state of inclusive disciplinary policies for Black and Indigenous students (Cawsey et al., 2016).

As we progress through the midstream phase, in the 2022-2023 school year, it is imperative that the intensity of communication increases (Cawsey et al., 2016). As school administrators begin implementing trauma-sensitive and restorative practices, staff will regularly receive information about the rollout of these new practices. School administrators will be allowed a small block of time in their monthly staff meetings to share information with their staff about trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices. Extensive communication on the change initiative will be necessary as LDSB staff will need to understand their new roles and changed expectations of the system (Cawsey et al., 2016). This information will be communicated to them through internal communication such as the *Strategic Priorities in Action* monthly newsletter and the monthly *Equity* newsletter (Cawsey et al., 2016). In addition, all LDSB stakeholders will see the issues of equity and the need for trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices regularly appearing on both board websites, posted by our Communications team with information from our Equity Coordinators, and school websites, posted by school administrators.

Once again, the transformative tenet of reconstructing knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequality will be utilized by the use of internal communication, news releases, and social media (Shields, 2018). Staff will also increasingly see external news releases from the LDSB Director and the Superintendent of Equity (Cawsey et al., 2016). Social media will be utilized in the midstream phase to increase information accessibility for all stakeholders in the LDSB (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Social media will offer the opportunity to communicate timely celebration of achievements, enthusiasm for the change, and emphasize the positive impact of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices (Cawsey et al., 2016). A further benefit of

social media will be that the TSSCC can gauge reactions and possible misinformation about trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices that need to be addressed (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Clarity of purpose in all of these rich communication mediums and celebrating a future envisioned state will allow for the acceptance, engagement, and involvement of all LDSB staff in the adoption of trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices (Cawsey et al., 2016). If particular school staff seem to be struggling, our change leader, the Mental Health Lead, may offer additional staff professional development through release time which will aid in allowing staff to adapt to the change (Cawsey et al., 2016). Further, utilizing the transformative tenet of an emphasis on the interconnectedness of systems and creating deep and equitable change will allow members of the TSSCC to maintain perspective and focus on the envisioned future state. This will result in minimal levels of defensiveness from TSSCC members who feel strongly about the need for trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices (Cawsey et al., 2016; Shields, 2018). In turn, this attitude will encourage change recipient receptiveness and adaptation (Cawsey et al., 2016; Shields, 2018).

During the midstream phase, conversations with superintendents about the progress in decreasing suspension and expulsion rates will allow change implementers and change facilitators to focus on particular school administrators struggling with the implementation of trauma-sensitive and restorative practices. This will allow the TSSCC to determine next steps and focus during this phase of communication. Once again, my contribution of research and knowledge of change practices will allow me to meaningfully contribute in my role as a change facilitator on the TSSCC (Cawsey et al., 2016). It is at this stage that reinforcement by specific members of the TSSCC may be appropriate. For example, a phone call from the Superintendent

of Student Achievement or Equity to a reluctant school administrator may be necessary. Indeed, in the case that a school administrator is reluctant to incorporate trauma-sensitive and restorative practices in their school, a phone call from a Superintendent emphasizing the imperative behind incorporating these practices, asking about the school administrator's concerns, and then directly asking them to implement these practices is a very strong persuasive technique (Cawsey et al., 2016). This will be a start towards addressing school administration outliers. Further measures may be necessary if the school administrator continues to be reluctant to implement the changes. These measures will be determined by the Superintendent in consultation with the support available from the TSSCC.

### **Confirming the Change Phase**

The confirming the change phase coincides with the institutionalization stage of the CPM. This is planned to occur in the 2023-2024 school year. At this point in the change initiative, suspension and expulsion rates for Black and Indigenous students will be significantly lowered, trauma-sensitive and restorative practices will have been adopted, and school administrators consulting the senior administration team before second suspensions take place will be entrenched. By this phase, the transformative tenets of deep and equitable change and the reconstruction of knowledge frameworks will have been engaged (Shields, 2018). Confirming the change phase will be communicated to celebrate the lowered suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students resulting from trauma-sensitive and restorative practices implementation (Cawsey et al., 2016). Finally, this confirmation of the successful change will be communicated on social media, on the LDSB and school websites, in news releases, and in our internal *Equity* and *Strategic Priorities in Action* newsletters.

### **Next Steps/Future Considerations**

This Organizational Improvement Plan addresses a systemic inequity- the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black and Indigenous students. The changes introduced in this OIP are far-reaching and essential for an equitable educational experience for Black and Indigenous students. Due to the depth of the issue of systemic racism in our educational institutions, I have short, mid, and long-term goals for this OIP.

In the short-term, I will use this OIP as an action plan to cement trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices in the LDSB. I will use this OIP as a starting point to begin a shift in educators' mindsets away from the student choice ideology towards an understanding of adaptive responses (Levinsky, 2016; Souers & Hall, 2017). Because it is possible, even highly probable, that the timeline proposed in this OIP may not be long enough to achieve the future desired state, the timeline may need to be extended if not a complete repetition of this CPM with variations undertaken. I will be actively involved in continuing to monitor the progress of this change initiative to ensure that the disciplinary changes introduced in this change initiative are sustained in the LDSB. Throughout the change initiative, I will continue to align trauma-sensitive and restorative practice implementation with anti-racist and equity issues in the LDSB in my communication with all educational stakeholders.

In the mid-term, I plan to continue to raise awareness amongst all stakeholders in my board of the racism entrenched in many educational practices, policies, and procedures. There remains a great deal of hard work to do throughout the LDSB in terms of identifying and addressing systemic inequities. However, I tend to agree with Gorski (2019) who says "Students experiencing racism can't wait for schools to move at their own pace and comfort level" (p. 56). As such, I will continue to seek out ways to address systemic inequities, Anti-Black racism, and

Anti-Indigenous racism in our board. I will use my agency within the TSSCC in the LDSB to raise awareness of the effects of racial and vicarious trauma and microaggressions on all marginalized student populations. Additionally, I will advocate for every new hire teacher in our school board to receive professional development on trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices during the New Teacher Induction Program training and for new school administrators to be trained in trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices as a part of their promotional practices. It is my hope that, in time, all LDSB educational staff will be fully versed and practicing trauma-sensitive and restorative justice principles. Additionally, I will advocate for school administrators to consult superintendents about all suspensions, instead of the second one. This will allow for more conversations about the utilization of restorative practices to occur on a regular basis.

In the long-term, as an educator with a transformative leadership mindset, I will continue to seek ways in which our educational institutions are equitable and inclusive for all students. The awareness of the entrenchment of racism in our institutions will need to occur in both our board and society to combat the effects of centuries of colonialism. Indeed, there needs to be a system-wide shift in order to challenge inequity. Acknowledging this, I will continue using Shields' (2018) transformative tenets to seek deep and equitable change, reconstructing knowledge frameworks, address issues of inequity, and exhibit moral courage. Further, using my knowledge of the AO and CRT, I will be aware of the flexibility and adaptability of racism to new structures and will view new educational initiatives through this lens (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; George et al., 2020; Kumashiro, 2000; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Using my newfound knowledge of change path models, monitoring and evaluation models, and communication models, I will work methodically to address other issues of systemic racism and inequality in our

board. Finally, as my career in the LDSB progresses, I will advocate for the work of anti-racism to become a condition of employment for administrators such as has been done in the TDSB's adoption of critical race and anti-oppressive language in their alignment of *Equity Leadership Competencies* with the Ontario Leadership Framework (TDSB, 2019).

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## Appendix

### Overview of Responsibilities and Actions Taken within the Change Plan

Stage	Action	Responsibility	Target Date
Awakening	Creation of the TSSCC	Mental Health Lead	Already Happened
Awakening	Advocate for inclusion of Black and Indigenous community representatives on the TSSCC	OIP Author	2021-2022
Awakening	Online survey gauging school administrators' awareness of trauma, problems with current progressive discipline model, and disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates in marginalized communities	Soft Data Sub-Committee	September 2021
Awakening	Collect statistical data of suspension and expulsions rates for Indigenous and Black students from the 2020-2021 school year	Data Analysis Sub-Committee	September 2021
Awakening	Communication of the need for change through monthly <i>Equity</i> and <i>Strategic Priorities</i> Newsletter and News Releases	<b>News Releases:</b> LDSB Director, Equity Superintendent <b>Monthly Staff Newsletters:</b> Equity Learning Coordinator and Diversity and Equity Coordinator	Already Happening
Mobilization	Raising awareness of the problem of disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of marginalized	<b>Workshop:</b> Mental Health Lead <b>Monitoring:</b> Mental Health Lead and Senior	October 2021

	groups school administrator workshop	Administrators on TSSCC <b>Evaluation:</b> TSSCC	
Mobilization	Anonymous school administrator survey monitoring the awareness/understanding of disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates	<b>Monitoring:</b> Soft Data Sub-Committee <b>Evaluation:</b> Soft Data Sub-Committee, TSSCC	October 2021
Mobilization	Introducing transformative leadership tenets school administrator workshop	<b>Workshop:</b> Mental Health Lead <b>Monitoring:</b> Mental Health Lead and Senior Administrators on TSSCC <b>Evaluation:</b> TSSCC	December 2021
Mobilization	Anonymous school administrator survey monitoring the awareness/understanding of transformative leadership tenets	<b>Monitoring:</b> Soft Data Sub-Committee <b>Evaluation:</b> Soft Data Sub-Committee, TSSCC	December 2021
Mobilization	Adaptive behaviours: School administrator workshop	<b>Workshop:</b> Mental Health Lead <b>Monitoring:</b> Mental Health Lead and Senior Administrators on TSSCC <b>Evaluation:</b> TSSCC	February 2022
Mobilization	Anonymous school administrator survey monitoring the awareness/understanding of adaptive behaviours	<b>Monitoring:</b> Soft Data Sub-Committee <b>Evaluation:</b> Soft Data Sub-Committee, TSSCC	February 2022
Mobilization	Trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices school administrator workshop	<b>Workshop:</b> Mental Health Lead <b>Monitoring:</b> Mental Health Lead and Senior Administrators on TSSCC <b>Evaluation:</b> TSSCC	April 2022

Mobilization	Anonymous school administrator survey monitoring the awareness/understanding trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices	<b>Monitoring:</b> Soft Data Sub-Committee <b>Evaluation:</b> Soft Data Sub-Committee, TSSCC	April 2022
Mobilization	Developing the need for change communication: monthly <i>Equity</i> and <i>Strategic Priorities</i> newsletters and news releases, social media	TSSCC	2021-2022 School year
Acceleration	School administrators put trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices in place in their homeschools	School Administrators	2022–2023 school year
Acceleration	Ongoing trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices school administrator workshops	<b>Workshop:</b> Mental Health Lead <b>Monitoring:</b> Mental Health Lead and Senior Administrators on TSSCC <b>Evaluation:</b> TSSCC	2022–2023 school year
Acceleration	Anonymous school administrator survey monitoring the awareness/understanding trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices	<b>Monitoring:</b> Data Analysis Sub-Committee <b>Evaluation:</b> Data Analysis Sub-Committee, TSSCC	2022–2023 school year
Acceleration	Monthly superintendent dialogue with school administrators about the work of anti-racism and new disciplinary practices	<b>Monitoring:</b> Superintendents <b>Evaluation:</b> TSSCC	2022–2023 school year
Acceleration	Staff PD on trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices	<b>Staff PD:</b> School Administrators, TSSCC <b>Monitoring:</b> Data Analysis Sub-Committee	2022–2023 school year

		<b>Evaluation:</b> Data Analysis Sub-Committee, TSSCC	
Acceleration	Engaging community in trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices at Trustee meetings and Parent Advisory committees	Trustees, TSSCC representatives	2022–2023 school year
Acceleration	Engaging community in trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices at the school level	School Administrators, TSSCC	2022–2023 school year
Acceleration	Statistical data of suspension and expulsions rates for Indigenous and Black students	<b>Monitoring:</b> Data Analysis Sub-Committee <b>Evaluation:</b> Data Analysis Sub-Committee, TSSCC	2022–2023 school year
Acceleration	Midstream change communication: monthly <i>Equity and Strategic Priorities</i> newsletters and news releases, social media	TSSCC	2022–2023 school year
Institutionalization	Trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices resulting in lowered suspension/expulsion rates for Black and Indigenous students celebrated through communication	All Stakeholders	2023-2024 school year