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Enhancing Racialized Staff Mental Health and Well-Being from an Equity-Focused Lens

Natacha Castor
ncastor@uwo.ca

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Abstract

The Des Grands Lac school board is facing an ongoing dearth of qualified teachers that warrants a critical examination in order to underscore the impact of low staffing on staff mental health. Among these factors, the damaging impacts of racism in all its forms on racialized educators' mental health has remained unexamined and unaddressed. As racism is deeply entrenched within the fabric of educational policies and practices, this discrimination is, too often, normalized. Consequently, owing to the racism, several racialized staff have reported experiences of anxiety, depression, and trauma, leaving them feeling alienated and undervalued. This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) sets out a framework to implement an equity-focused mental health initiative that seeks to target support towards racialized staff experiencing discrimination. The OIP change-vision aims to establish allyship as a leadership strategy for school leaders in the Des Grands Lacs (DGL) school board in order to propagate and amplify equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives to combat racial discrimination. The application of critical race theory amplifies racialized staff's voice to counter dominant discourse and raise awareness for the need for change. Drawing on transformative, servant and Ubuntu leadership styles, this OIP aims to offer solutions to create an inclusive environment where all staff could possibly flourish and safely express their lived experience. Such an inclusive environment requires a major shift in organizational culture and in the mindsets at all levels of leadership. This OIP explores ways to challenge systems of power that maintain discriminatory practices through building strong relationships and allyships.

Keywords: Educators mental health, racial discrimination, transformative leadership, microaggressions, critical race theory, servant leadership.

Executive Summary

Des Grands Lacs (DGL) is a publicly funded French-language K-12 public school board, located in Ontario. Along with other French-language school boards of the province, DGL is currently facing an ongoing shortage of qualified teachers and education professionals. The current situation, combined with the effects of COVID-19, has undermined the mental health and well-being of educators who continue to remain overburdened by the unique challenges of providing instruction in a cultural and linguistic minority context.

Within this setting, in addition to dealing with the challenges mentioned above, racialized educators and staff deal with race-based stress and racial discrimination on a daily basis, which further undermines their mental health and well-being. As an institution, DGL has few mechanisms in place to identify, assess, or counter incidents of racism. The impact of racial discrimination, inequities, and differential treatment on the mental health and well-being of Black and Indigenous students is well documented (Halberstadt et al., 2018). Additionally, numerous studies focussing on the well-being of racialized educators point to many of the same challenges as those of racialized students (McGee & Stovall, 2015). To this end, McGee, and Stovall (2015) note that the impact of social inequalities on racialized bodies, and more specifically how racism affects educators of colour, remains yet to be understood within the larger field of education.

With this considered, the purpose of this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP), lies in improving the institutional mental health and well-being support for racialized educators. This plan seeks to establish an equity-focused mental health framework that is culturally responsive and that provides a formal mechanism to address racial discrimination. This OIP recognizes racialized educators and staff as an equity-deserving group, confronting what Kohli et al. (2017) describe as the “new racism,” which is more covert, hidden, and pervasive. Within this context, the constant and insidious exposure (Carter, 2007) to covert racism is considered equally damaging to the human spirit and psyche as direct racist attacks (Raucher & Wilson, 2017). Drawing from this principle, racial discrimination can be

understood as an additive that increases traumatic stress on racialized bodies (Brown, 2008; Carter, 2007). The OIP is driven by various leadership and change models to propel change and bring an understanding to the intersection of mental health and racism as it relates to racialized educators.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the organizational context, such as the history, mission, and vision of the DGL school board, as well as the broader minority context in which it operates. Chapter 1 goes on to identify and frame the Problem of Practice (PoP) and give insights as to why change is urgently needed. The analysis of the PoP raises questions which seek to identify innovative leadership practices and behaviors that can help DGL to address race-based stress and comprehend various dimensions of racial discrimination. Principals and managers have been identified as key stakeholders who can leverage their symbolic power in shaping innovative practices that are culturally responsive to support racialized staff mental health. This OIP uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) to enable a shared language and methodology. This orientation allows us to understand the intersection of mental health and racism, and to posit potential outcomes for racialized educators. Given this structure, the first chapter outlines a change-vision that is both bottom-up and employee-centered (Deszca et al., 2020).

The envisioned future necessitates that the organization depend on strong relationships and meaningful allyships to mobilize support and commitment. Furthermore, the OIP leverages the DGL seniors' leaders, principals, and managers to drive a cultural shift that promotes change and collaboration. The vision for change also leverages influence to create an organizational culture-based accountability, with the support of coalition and partnership. A culture-based accountability organization can provide the appropriate conditions for all stakeholders to learn and develop their capacities (Fullan, 2019), and to actively contribute to the equity work at all levels of the organization. This culture-based accountability is to foster collaboration, trust, openness, respect, and autonomy.

My heart overflows with gratitude for the last three years which were most gratifying. In this adventure, I brought with me my family, my husband Yvon, my children Sara and Joshua. Their love, encouragement, support, and confidence in me have been a constant source of energy for me. I am grateful for my circle of friends and colleagues for their support. I thank all the professors, and especially Dr. Edwards: your support, empathy, feedback, and guidance over the past year has been so meaningful and significant to me. Finally, I would like to dedicate this accomplishment to my late parents who did not have the privilege of education. I hope that I have made you proud.

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Acronyms

ADFO (Association des Directions et Directions Adjointes des Écoles Franco-Ontariennes)

AFO (Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario)

AOPED (Association Ontarienne des Professionnels de l'Éducation de la Diversité)

BLM (Black Lives Matter)

CRT (Critical Race Theory)

DGL (Des Grands Lacs)

EAP (Employee Assistance Program)

HRM (Human Resources Management)

OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)

PAL (Politique d'Aménagement Linguistique - the French-language planning policy enacted by the Ontario Ministry of Education)

PDSA (plan-do-study-act)

PoBC (Parents of Black Children)

PoP (Problem of Practice)

SLT (Superintendent Leadership team)

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem

The Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) seeks to establish a mental health framework using an equity-based, antiracist lens to support Des Grands Lacs (DGL) [anonymized] school district leaders in their efforts to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Specifically, this framework aims to enhance senior and school leaders' understanding of how these concepts apply to race (Trenerry & Paradies, 2012). Additionally, this framework would attempt to confront the so-called 'neutral' assumptions about race (Showunmi et al., 2016) in the education system. Developing a shared, nuanced understanding of racialized and equity concerns will offer senior and school leaders an opportunity to not only identify but also to create pathways to counter racism and racial discrimination within the DGL organizational context.

The present chapter examines this organizational context, further probing the leadership dynamics that inform the operation of the DGL school board. First, I present my leadership position and role within the organization, while also clarifying the impact of my own lens on the change-process. I then introduce the problem of practice (PoP) and the various factors that frame these nuanced issues. My discussion then focuses on the questions of critical inquiry that emerge from the PoP to map out the intersectional factors, patterns, and forces that influence the vision for change. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the organization's readiness to change and identifies drivers that could potentially support and influence the change-process.

To begin, the following section introduces and situates the PoP within the organization's broader political, economic, social, and cultural context which along with DGL's current leadership approach have significant implications on the PoP addressed by this OIP.

Organizational Context

The organizational context described within this section provides insight into the organization's history, mission, vision, and values. It also briefly discusses DGL's organizational hierarchy and structure.

Current Organizational Context

In Ontario, French language education is the result of numerous advocacy battles that were fought for the recognition of minority linguistic and cultural rights of Franco-Ontarians (Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, n.d.) (AFO). French-language school boards thereby serve as a political driver that guarantees Franco-Ontarian families with equitable access to French-language education (AFO, n.d., 2019). As one of twelve French-language K-12 public school boards in Ontario, DGL possesses a historical legacy imbued with the several challenges that are involved in delivering instruction in a minority setting. With student enrollment reaching 14,000, DGL has 56 elementary and secondary schools spanning a large geographical territory (DGL, 2021). The organization also offers a culturally diverse learning environment, with its student and staff population speaking a cumulative total of more than sixty languages. (DGL, 2021).

This increased-cultural diversification of French language schools, mainly in urban settings, began with a wave of immigration in Ontario in the 1960s that prioritized qualified Caribbean migrants. Prior to 1967, race-based immigration policies negatively influenced Canada's custom and immigration policies that limited entry for Black and racialized people (Aladejebi, 2021). However, as the growth of the education sector compelled the hiring of several new foreign-trained teachers, Ontario's educational system has undergone a slow—but dramatic—institutional transformation resulting from this increased diversity (Aladejebi, 2021). In fact, the impact of French-speaking newcomers, especially non-white educators, has also reshaped aspects of the broader Franco-Ontarian identity (The Working Group, 2021); these changes have similarly transformed French-language school communities into diverse and vibrant educational settings.

However, a study commissioned in 2019 by l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)—known in English as the Association of

French-language Principals—reveals that the positions of principals in Ontario French schools, however, do not reflect this racial diversity. Administration and leadership positions are predominantly white at about 90.4% of available positions; First Nation, Métis, or Inuit principals account for only 4.8% of available positions while only 3.3% of principals identify as Black and 1.6% of Arab ethnicity (Pollock & Wang, 2019). Notably, the DGL school board has been increasing its leadership diversity and representation at both, the school level as well as at the system level over the past few years. Despite these efforts, however, the historical legacy of colonialism, systemic exclusion, and systemic racism toward Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) within the Ontario education system continues to significantly impact both students and racialized educators (Aladejebi, 2021).

This institutional legacy has created structural mechanisms that pave way to systemic racism, creating a plurality of disadvantages for present-day racialized learners and staff (Ramjattan, 2019). That legacy “elevate(s) white people over all peoples of Color” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 142). Importantly, the Ontario educational system exists within a broader institutional structure that upholds white power and white privilege (Aladejebi, 2021; Ramjattan, 2019). Thus, DGL also partakes and contributes to systemic processes that maintain and reproduce systemic racism, white privilege, and cultural norms.

Overall, these broader political, historical, economic, and cultural factors exert a significant influence on the lived experiences of the community members who work at and attend DGL. Subsequently, these factors also combine with their broader identity and heritage, offering the Ontario Francophone community a distinct positionality and unique perspective.

Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Contexts

In recent years, the province of Ontario has adopted fiscally conservative policies resulting in budget cuts which have affected DGL’s operational planning; these cutbacks have had further reverberations in the broader Francophone community. As Gutek explains (2013), “conservative principles and ideologies rooted in cultural heritage emphasize the transmission of traditional values; ultimately, these values seek to integrate individuals into

a shared cultural identity” (Gutek, 2013, p.258). However, conservative philosophy and institutions can also alienate and violate other demographics’ cultural heritage and traditions, resulting in group’s disintegration and assimilation (Mako, 2012). Apple (2016) concurs and extends this analysis, stating the imposed “sense of nation and tradition... is largely based on a fear of ‘pollution’ from the culture and the body of those whom they consider the Others” (p. 508). This interpretation suggests a more concealed and insidious racial dynamic at play with respect to policies that disproportionately affect minority groups, such as French first language speakers in Ontario (Apple, 2016).

The OIP’s timing, particularly given the current political and situational context of French language school boards like DGL, is significant in the context of assessing the success and viability of this project. On the social and cultural front, human rights; social justice advocates have mobilized communities in working to dismantle racism against Black and Indigenous peoples. These increased discussions surrounding race and equity have also resulted in a strong call to action across sectors for policy changes and increased accountability. Within the education sector, new possibilities—previously unfeasible—are now emerging that coincide with the vision for change advanced by this OIP.

Mission and Vision

DGL’s mission statement centres collaboration, communication, and leadership as key values that reaffirm both its mission and commitment to delivering excellence in French-language education. Specifically, DGL’s Multi-Year Planning (2021-2025) strategic plan prioritizes equity and inclusion while promoting student and staff well-being.-Supporting these goals would, however, requires the school board to undertake anticipatory and transformative changes in order to redirect and reorient the organization’s culture and identity (Bunea, 2016; Deszca et al., 2020).

Organizational Structure and Existing Leadership Approaches

Appendix A shows the hierarchical and transactional reporting structure of DGL as governed by a Board of Trustees that oversees strategic planning. The executive leadership team comprises of the director of education, seven superintendents, the director of

communications, and the director of human resources. Within this organizational structure, I report to the superintendent of Special Education and Support Services as the manager and clinical supervisor of the Social Work Services.

In addition to providing special education programming and Individual Education Plans (IEP) to students with exceptionalities, the Special Education department in which I work also houses other services: including professional and paraprofessional teams such as psychologists, psychometrists, and speech and language pathologists. As the manager, I employ a multi-disciplinary approach to support and meet student-needs. Since matters of social justice and equity are of great interest to all professionals currently working in this department, we often engage in discussions about the sector's procedures, practices, and equitable distribution of resources. This discourse, for instance, also attempts to identify trends related to equity, such as determining who can be identified with an IEP, who would be identified as gifted, etc. Our department recognizes that in order to achieve social justice, historically underserved and marginalized groups must be given the same value as their dominant culture counterparts (Ryan & Rottmann, 2007).

Broadly, the DGL school board emphasizes both shared participative and servant leadership approaches. Shared participative leadership draws on the Ministry of Education's *Politique d'Aménagement Linguistique (PAL)* (Berger, 2017), which ensures the safeguarding, enrichment, and transmission of Ontario's French language and culture (Berger, 2017). Shared participative leadership is also evident through DGL's workplace culture, leadership, and overall commitment to upholding the mandate of French-language schools.

Servant leadership is well-embedded within the organization due to a culture in which school principals are expected to commit acts of service to both, their school and their community (Al-Mahdy et al., 2016). This is important because servant leadership and shared participative leadership advance principles of cooperation and participation that build the necessary trust required to envision a planned change (Deszca et al., 2020). Given my

unique positionality within the DGL school board, I will reflect on my leadership position and positionality in the following section.

Leadership Position and Lens Statement

In the following paragraphs, I describe my leadership position in the DGL school board—specifically, I consider the impact of my agency, power, and personal voice on the proposed initiatives for change. Furthermore, I reflect on how my leadership style shapes my professional practice. Thus, the resulting philosophy of practice serves as my compass, which guides my intention and purpose in contributing to the proposed organizational improvements.

Agency and Power

Prior to my employment at DGL, I worked in the mental health field for over twenty-five years. Specifically, my background is in alternative mental healthcare, which is a grassroots movement founded on principles of collective action, shared values, and visions (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003) that seek to counter the biomedical paradigm of mental health. Critically, it advocates for a more humanistic and decentralized psychiatric mental health service delivery. Although my current position at DGL, where I have worked for the past eight years, does not allow me to directly support employee well-being, I nevertheless, collaborate with human resources management on initiatives that support wellness through knowledge-sharing about various mental health approaches and practices. In this-manner, I directly prioritize mental health and equity discussions in conversations at the systemic level.

I am a social worker by trade. In my practice, I seek “social transformation as forms of justice, equality and emancipation” (Gray & Webb, 2013, p, 52). As the manager of Social Work Services at DGL school board, I contribute my own significant leadership experience to the proposed changes articulated in this OIP. In my current role, I manage and supervise a team of social workers that provide tiered mental health support and individual student interventions. My position compels me to work in close collaboration with managers and directors, such as the director of citizenship education and cultural leadership, the mental

health leader and the directors of curriculum, equity, and safe and caring schools to operationalize executive decisions given by the superintendent leadership team. This role also requires strong communication skills, the capacity to navigate different organizational cultures and subcultures, as well as the ability to collaborate, share resources, and address complex problems.

Throughout my career, I have worked hard to develop a positive reputation founded in trust and collaboration among my colleagues. This is how I primarily exert my network power (Deszca et al., 2020) in connecting people across the organization to tackle various challenges when they arise. I am routinely called upon by principals, administrators, and superintendents to assist with complex situations that involve students, parents, or school communities. Despite this, in my role as a social worker, I cast myself as an outsider within the system because I do not share the same pedagogical or administrative background as other managers. Thus, as I navigate the system, I draw on my values, self-knowledge, flexibility, humility, idealism, and commitment (Alston, 2005). These values also support my leadership approach and acquired equity lens, which I address in the following paragraphs.

Leadership position

My leadership philosophy is influenced by post-heroic approaches that are fluid, mutual, decentralized, and relational (Fletcher, 2004; Carroll et al., 2019). Post-heroic approaches challenge one-dimensional, male-dominant Western perspectives, including, among others, the 'great man' theories and trait-based approaches, such as charismatic leadership (Carroll et al., 2019). These leadership approaches focus on leaders' attributes, personalities, and skills and situate them within a hierarchical structure (Carroll et al. 2019). Conversely, I view leadership as a process, a group phenomenon, and a system of interdependence (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003; McCauley & Palus, 2021). This leadership perspective is particularly evident in the collaboration that I foster within my team. Specifically, I create and amplify spaces for members to participate in team decision-making and orientations; while also encouraging all system leaders to address larger-scale issues and break down barriers and silos whenever possible.

As a leader, I believe that I am at my best when I am of service to others and to my community. As previously discussed, cultivating collaboration is a core value and belief that I demonstrate as a manager, teammate, and colleague by “enabling, supporting, facilitating” (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003, p. 22). I strive to build caring relationships that foster collective learning, generative dialogue, and shared understanding (Fletcher, 2004; Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003). Establishing strong relationships and connections with others is also one of the chief characteristics of authentic leadership. Being aware of my inherent virtues is crucial, as this process assists me in making choices and acting in line with these values. With purpose, heart, and compassion, “I lead from conviction” (Northouse, 2019, p.198).

As a Black woman in a leadership position, I am cognizant of the inequalities and inequities that I face in exercising my leadership (Alston, 2005). To that end, and as a ‘tempered radical’ leader, I am invested in advancing critical social justice work. Meyerson and Scully (1995) define tempered radical individuals as people who are simultaneously loyal to their organization, but also to social justice ideology; this can sometimes put them in opposition with the dominant culture espoused by their organization (Alston, 2005)—a tension that I routinely experience.

Meyerson and Scully (1995) further suggest that the radicalism of such leaders compels them to confront the status quo, while “their temperedness reflects the way they have been toughened by challenges, angered by what they see as injustices or ineffectiveness, and inclined to seek moderation in their interactions with members closer to the centre of organizational values and orientations” (p. 586). In my professional practice, I intentionally “rock the boat and stay in the boat” (Alston, 2005, p. 677) to promote change even when it creates conflict and challenges in staying in line with my abovementioned values.

Like Lopez (2016) asserts, critical social justice leaders must be persistent, bold, and willing to take risks to disrupt dominant ideology and practices. As a leader, my social work frame is also informed by an anti-oppressive and anti-colonial lens; this foundation provides me with the ethical compass necessary to critically examine the institutional environment of this PoP—an environment in which I also work (Hurley & Taiwo, 2019). And while I

acknowledge that doing this work is often emotionally laborious, I nevertheless lean into the task offering my entire self.

Role in the Potential Change Process

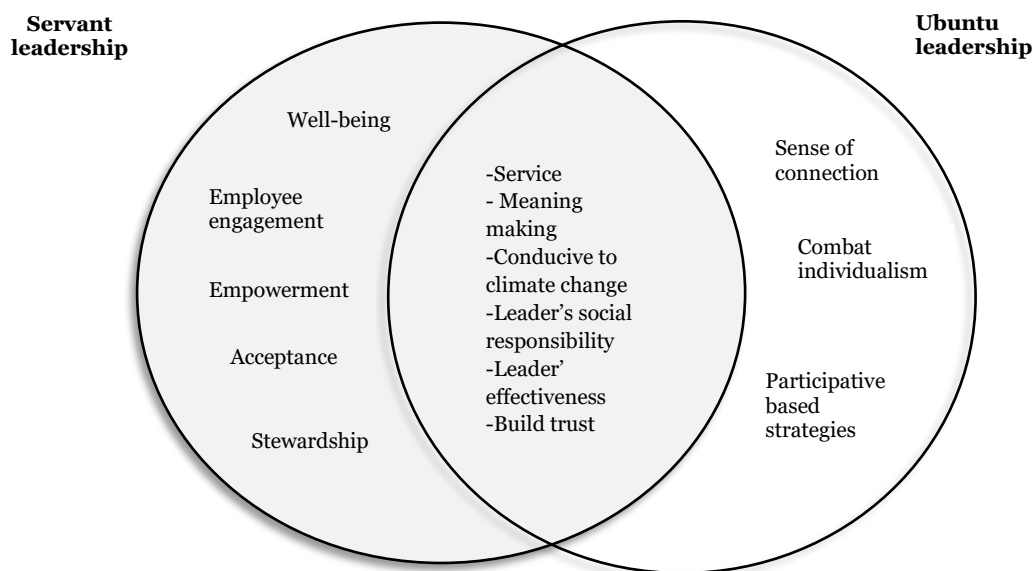
Although transformative change is inherently a collective endeavour, I view my specific role as a knowledge broker focused on highlighting the intersection of racism and mental health. Langeveld et al. (2016) situate knowledge brokering at the juncture of research, policy, and practice. A knowledge broker can “make strategic use of information... to influence others by presenting them with models and ideas based on research evidence” (p. 2). In other words, knowledge brokering is a complex activity that includes “identifying problems; selecting, interpreting and communicating knowledge; motivating producers and users; mediating between stakeholders; and providing instruction to individuals for the integration of knowledge in their policies and practice” (Langeveld et al., 2016, p. 2). In this OIP, I serve as a vital conduit of information to key stakeholders by translating knowledge into practice and engaging key stakeholders. As I further discuss in Chapter 3 with the Implementation, Evaluation and Communication Plan, I am motivated to create an equitable and accountable culture at DGL with respect to these intersectional factors.

Leadership Lens

My leadership philosophy, values, and beliefs are underpinned by both servant leadership and Ubuntu principles. As previously noted, DGL already has a culture of servant leadership. Notably, Robert Greenleaf’s (1970) seminal writings describe a servant leader as one who responds to individuals’ highest needs, priorities, and well-being. Fundamentally, servant leadership works to empower, grow, and develop followers in becoming leaders themselves (Panaccio et al., 2015; Walumbwa, 2010). Consequently, servant leaders tend to foster employee engagement, well-being, and inclusion. However, unlike the present leadership culture at DGL, my servant leadership is also strongly informed by the Ubuntu Afrocentric postcolonial collectivist approach (Aliye, 2020; Ncube, 2010). Within this perspective, I seek intention in my leadership practice by empowering our community of staff and students through empathy, compassion, and solidarity.

As shown in Figure 1, servant leadership and Ubuntu leadership share a humanistic view with a predisposition to service; thus, both leadership styles contribute to more equitable societies and institutions because of their willingness to tackle present-day problems (Brubaker, 2013).

Figure 1
Leadership Lens



Adapted from: Brubaker, T. A. (2013). Servant leadership, Ubuntu, and leader effectiveness in Rwanda. *Emerging Leaderships Journeys*. 6(1), 114-147.

Both approaches focus on leaders' social responsibilities to create a work environment that is meaningful, supportive, and favourable to change. As a knowledge broker, I will use servant leadership and the Ubuntu approach to support school leaders by sharing models and methods that can enhance their capacity to create participative-based strategies that foster a climate conducive to change. Both leadership principles presume a high level of trust, interaction, communication, and exchange that reinforce relational dynamics; ideally, this will encourage stakeholders to adopt a greater commitment to the proposed changes by seeking out group participation and perspectives (Chiu et al., 2016). Additionally, tempered leadership encourages me to act with authenticity and perseverance; this will help me in

supporting school leaders to establish processes rooted in cooperative approaches to learning and development.

While there is a marked contrast between my leadership approach and the current structure of DGL, this OIP posits that both leadership models can align with the present context of DGL's shared participative leadership. Thus, my leadership lens is instrumental in identifying and centring the PoP within the educational and societal context required to undertake the proposed organizational changes.

Leadership Problem of Practice

The PoP addressed by this OIP focuses on the need to support the well-being and mental health of racialized staff, i.e., support workers, professional workers, and teachers. This support must elevate racialized staff voices so that their experiences are heard, valued, and considered. As highlighted by The Voices of Ontario Black Educators in a report commissioned by the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators (ONABSE, 2015), Black and racialized staff face systemic barriers involving race-based discrimination that often take the form of day-to-day racial microaggressions (ONABSE, 2015) and racial invalidations that assume racialized educators' inferiority (DeCuir-Gunby, 2020). Similarly, the Association Ontarienne des Professionnels de l'Éducation de la Diversité (AOPED, n.d.)—also known as the Ontario Association of Educational Professionals of Diversity—similarly, criticizes the discriminatory practices that racialized educators consistently experience in French-language school boards.

Given my own positionality as a racialized employee, I am often at the forefront of observing distressed educators, specifically, racialized staff, through first-hand accounts of their experiences with different forms of racism. Through these stories, I reckon that some racialized DGL staff and administrators perceive that BIPOC employees (Black Indigenous and People of Colour) are not promoted to permanent positions at the same rate as their white counterparts; Similarly, it is also perceived that BIPOC employees are more frequently offered precarious contracts. Rooted in these perceptions is the subtext that many racialized staff—equally as qualified as their white counterparts—believe that they lack professional

respect in the workplace which contributes to being overlooked for permanent contracts and promotions. Since systemic racism is multi-layered and intersectional (Jay, 2009), racialized staff frequently experience the fatigue of racial battle—not only is the wear and tear of dealing with systemic racism both physically and psychologically exhausting, but the fear of retaliation often pre-emptively silences racialized staff from sharing concerns or advocating for more equitable working conditions (McGee & Stovall, 2015).

The accumulative experience of racial discrimination may also lead racialized educators to experience symptoms of burnout, anxiety, and depression (DeCuir-Gunby, 2020; Mohamed & Beagan, 2019; Williams et al., 2022). These mental health symptoms often trigger responses such as vicarious trauma, which is the impact of the “undirected experience of hearing, seeing racist acts and behaviours committed against other members of one's racial group” (Chae et al., 2021, p. 509). Williams et al. (2022) further state that vicarious traumas constitute a personal threat to psychological safety even if one is not the direct target. Most subtly, this vicarious stress is experienced by racialized students and staff who regularly receive or hear comments about their food, their hair, or any other distinctive attribute that could be a target of racial prejudice.

Vicarious stress can also emerge when current events or political affairs are distressing. The 2020 death of George Floyd, for instance, triggered traumatic wounds to both racialized students and staff due to the disproportionate, callous amount of police brutality historically committed against black bodies. Furthermore, DGL then had a delayed response—owing to politics—in condemning the act and taking a stance against anti-Black racism. This delay had the effect of re-traumatizing racialized students and staff, leaving them feeling confused, angered, invisible, and humiliated, as well as activating emotional reactions of hypervigilance, withdrawal, and a loss of belonging (Williams et al., 2022).

It is worth noting that DGL has a policy titled ‘Well-Being and Attendance Management,’ which aims to cultivate a healthy work environment and mitigate risks to physical, psychological, and psychosocial health. However, the policy provides no guidelines or resources to help school leaders i.e., school principals and managers provide an inclusive

environment rooted in psychosocial safety. Instead, the primary mandate and orientation of this policy is to monitor staff attendance, which does not align with its purported objectives on well-being. Although DGL also has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), it is limited in both, duration, and scope; thus, neither the EAP program nor the current well-being policy is culturally responsive to staff mental health needs. Instead, although the wellness section of this policy superficially addresses elements of a healthy lifestyle and work-life balance, it offers no meaningful acknowledgment of race-based stress resulting from frequent daily microaggressions.

In the same vein, DGL also has a Harassment and Discrimination Policy to ensure that students and staff are treated with respect and dignity. However, this policy similarly falls short. While the policy does address racial and ethnocultural discrimination, it does not provide any formal mechanisms to document, investigate, or respond to complaints of racial discrimination. Moreover, the policy does not bridge the gap between racial discrimination and the resulting mental health implications. For instance, it is unclear whether or not all employees are even familiar with the policy. Additionally, when an employee does want to make a complaint, it also requires the staff member to speak directly with the person accused of perpetuating the racist acts in question. This is untenable for many reasons related to psychological safety and well-being; leading to the actual harassment policy not adequately achieving organizational goals related to well-being and equity.

Importantly, school principals and managers are key stakeholders responsible in providing a healthy, safe, and supportive work environment. However, Solomon (2002) argues that in practice, school leaders often act as social pacifiers focused on maintaining inequities and the status quo rather than as political agents of change. Traditionally, administrative training for school leaders has emphasized management skills with little attention to racial equity or the intersection and correlational forces of oppression in ways that maintain exclusion (DeMatthews et al., 2021). Thus, there is a need to provide more robust professional learning opportunities that would enable school leaders to develop the awareness necessary in order to critically reflect on how one could challenge unjust and

unequal practices (Green, 2017). Professional learning could also provide school leaders with culturally responsive tools and strategies to alleviate stress on staff seeking to report discriminatory and unjust treatment.

Framing the Problem of Practice

Thompson (2020) argues that school boards that commit to anti-racist changes must prioritize mental health and provide resources that foster a caring and inclusive environment for all. In describing an ideally inclusive environment, this PoP combines critical race theory (CRT) with a political, economic, social, and technological (PEST) analysis to examine practices, norms, and beliefs around mental health through a race-conscious lens.

Critical Race Theory

Emerging from the legal field, CRT has expanded into several other disciplines, including education. The key tenets of Solorzano et al. (2000)'s CRT education-framework focus on the centrality of race and racism, challenging the dominant ideology, committing to social justice, illuminating experiential knowledge, and proposing a transdisciplinary perspective. As a theoretical foundation and a methodological tool, I use CRT to highlight institutional responsibility and the importance of accountability in achieving equitable outcomes for racialized students and staff members.

As Welton et al. (2018) explain, acknowledging the pervasiveness of racism as part of the social fabric within institutions is a crucial step in achieving racial equity. To this end, the Anti-Racism Act—enacted in 2017—and the latest amendments of the Education Act (including but not limited to Bill 67: Racial Equity in the Education System Act) (Ontario Government, 2022) not only acknowledge the historical legacy of racism in the education system, but also require school boards to implement equity plans and accountability measures that promote anti-racism.

Presently, DGL is expanding anti-racist training and equity initiatives. In so doing, the school board seeks to critically examine current practices and discriminatory behaviours. However, the organization does not yet have an equity policy, nor have they formally recognized and named the “historical [racist] narratives” (Welton et al., 2018, p. 4) that

continue to centralize power in ways that reproduce systems of oppression. (Cabrera, 2018). Unfortunately, this absence of explicit language and guidelines for equity and inclusion tend to reinforce established power structures and hinder efforts to enact a social justice agenda (Bradbury et al., 2020; DeCuir-Gunby, 2020). As previously noted, DGL's current Well-Being and Attendance Policy broadly functions as a tool to maintain hegemony and the status quo; thus, it is an example of a policy that systematically disadvantages racialized bodies for the benefit and interest of those traditionally holding power (Bradbury et al., 2020; Cabrera, 2018). To better advance equity measures, DGL could embed anti-racist and anti-discrimination language (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) into the Well-being and Attendance and Harassment and Discrimination policies: an important step in acknowledging the othering of racialized staff (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

Incorporating anti-racism and anti-discrimination language will encourage school leaders to engage in necessary conversations that critique and disrupt the race-blind neutrality of said policies and amplify racialized voices and experiences in the organization (Cabrera, 2018). Elevating staff's lived experiences and narratives is a key mechanism in challenging dominant and deficit-based views that harm employee well-being. To this end, Solórzano et al. (2000) describe how CRT could offer a critical, racially-attentive language to racialized staff and marginalized groups so that they can adequately describe their experiences of any form of racial inequity. Thus, applying a CRT lens to the current wellness policy would assist school leaders in identifying race-related traumas and their impact on the racialized staff. As a knowledge broker within the organization, I can support change agents, which include myself and stakeholders that are directly involved in contributing to the change efforts, with this inquiry and reflection by providing evidence-based research that supports the importance of future decision-making that challenges, disrupts, and deconstructs dominant ideology, practices, and structures in pursuit of increased racial equity (DeCuir & Dixon 2004; McGee & Stovall, 2015).

It is important to note that CRT has broadened the scope of our understanding in how systemic racism functions and operates. In framing the PoP, thus, it is imperative to consider

the influence of political, economic, social, and technological factors that impact the external and internal factors in reinforcing systemic racism.

Political, Economic, Social, Technology Analysis

In any organization, its broader context can either reinforce structures of oppression or function as a liberatory catalyst for change. In the context of anti-racism—particularly in the education sector—recent social unrests have created mounting political, social, and economic pressures that provoke a reactive and unplanned change in both, private and public spheres.

Political Factors

Politically, pressure is mounting for educational leaders to improve measures of accountability, particularly with respect to anti-racist initiatives. For instance, Parents of Black Children (PoBC): an international organization that operates across Canada with a chapter in the province of Ontario has launched an anonymous school racism reporting tool for educators and staff, witnessing anti-Black racism perpetrated against students, colleagues, or oneself (PoBC, n. d.). This tool challenges school boards to improve their own anti-Black racism reporting and response measures in schools (Nasser, 2021). Furthermore, as of 2023, Ontario school boards will be legally bound to follow the Ministry of Education's Anti-Racism Act/Anti-Racism Data Standards to collect disaggregated data that superintendents and school principals can use to strengthen frontline efforts to achieve their equity goals. Since racialized educators face similar experiences as their students with systemic racism and structural barriers, the Ministry's initiative will oblige school boards to be more responsive and accountable to both students and the community. This data will also inform the implementation of new policies that question the status quo and support employees' mental health and well-being from an equity perspective.

Economic Factors

The COVID-19 pandemic not only widened economic disparities, but also-brought forth the ways in which economic outcomes tend to fall along racial lines (Wei & Bunjun,

2021). Additionally, it underscored how the cycle of poverty creates systemic barriers for racialized groups (Portelli & Eizadiras, 2018). This is significant for the OIP since DGL is culturally diverse, the social and cultural norms within the school board at DGL tend to reinforce the dominant group's norms and customs. Normative whiteness then reinforces established power structures, which tend to conceal acts of racism and inequity. Moreover, since these norms are presented as universal principles to which everyone is expected to conform to, outsiders of the dominant group risk social consequences if this status quo is challenged (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Ladson-Billings (1998) rightly note that changing or refusing to abide by these social norms can lead to ostracization, a lack of belonging, and social apprehensiveness for non-white people (Wei & Bunjun, 2021). Non-conformity to social and cultural norms, thus, may result in social division along racial lines, including subtle acts of covert racism such as microaggressions, experiences of isolation, social exclusion, and openly racist attacks (Wei & Bunjun, 2021) on racialized students and staff. Consequently, in attending to staff mental health and well-being, the change team must ensure that the organizational, cultural, and social norms reflect and represent different perspectives and cultures to enhance a sense of belonging and well-being for all. This requires taking an active anti-racist stance and championing ideas that come from multiple sources.

Technological Factors

Traditional mass media (broadcasting, television, newspaper) has long played a vital role in preserving and supporting freedom of expression and access to information. In fact, media accessibility is important in exposing individuals to different viewpoints and perspectives (Bouvier, 2020; Spruce & Leaf, 2017). Moreover, as evident following the tragic death of George Floyd, media, particularly, social media activism, has played a key role in amplifying the voices of traditionally under-represented groups and individuals.

Broadly, social media has widened and diversified the space for social justice hubs, coalitions, and activism (Spruce & Leaf, 2017); thus, possessing the potential to serve as a means to reclaim narratives centering around BIPOC and racialized voices. Online spaces

provide, in this way, new opportunities to mobilize, educate, and communicate with members of equity-seeking groups. In the same vein, social media also has the potential to decrease individual bias and discriminatory attitudes. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, technologies have been impactful in highlighting disparities that disproportionately affect racialized communities, ranging from risk factors and health outcomes to functional challenges in accessing technological devices and connecting to the internet. The pandemic has also modified the learning environment and workplace dynamics surrounding teaching and learning spaces and practices (Allen et al., 2020). Yet, despite many benefits of online instruction, I believe, education and learning are, first and foremost, relational activities. Virtual instruction has thus revealed the extent to which human contact remains vitally essential in the (un)learning process.

Social Factors

Although aspects of the DGL school board are diverse, the organization is nevertheless rooted in Eurocentric social norms to which everyone is expected to conform (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Thus, in committing to anti-racism initiatives, DGL leaders must ensure that policies and practices reflect and represent its diversity. To promote an inclusive environment, DGL leaders must ensure that different perspectives permeate these organizational, cultural, and social norms. According to Ladson-Billings (1998), any deviation in behaviour or social norms can erode a sense of belonging and create social discomfort for people from ethnic minority groups (Wei & Bunjun, 2021); which would result in isolation and social exclusion for both racialized students and educators. Consequently, the PoP raises relevant several questions that will underpin the OIP and guide the change team through the implementation process.

Guiding Questions Emerging from Problem of Practice

Briefly, the PoP is guided by three central questions that are consciousness-raising, generative in fostering change, and focused a shared vision with impactful solutions.

Question # 1: What practices and leadership behaviours can school leaders undertake to address race-based stress and covert racism?

School leaders (school principals and managers) play a central role in creating an inclusive school environment and supporting employee well-being (DeMatthews et al., 2020). The literature, however, indicates that principals' training generally does not prepare them to lead inclusive schools nor address or respond to issues involving racial equity (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Spikes, 2018; Weiner, 2003). Thus, school leaders require additional support to develop their own frameworks around social justice and anti-racism. Put differently, professional learning must increase key actors' skills and efficacy to critically analyze and act on systems, structures, and practices that reinforce inequities and diminish well-being (Diem et al., 2019). To this end, employing a CRT lens in this PoP will facilitate and advance these crucial conversations with education professionals.

Question # 2. What structures and processes can strengthen racialized educators' psychological safety and experiences?

This question supports and builds upon Human Resource Management's (HRM) and school leaders' capacity to create meaningful and intentional practices that increase their staff's perception of psychological safety. According to Edmondson (1999), psychologically safe staff feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work within a mutually respectful and trusting environment in which they are supported when voicing their opinions and ideas; research also finds that psychologically safe employees are generally empowered to take risks (Edmondson, 1999). Psychologically safe here is used in terms of psychological safety depending on working conditions and external factors. Consequently, addressing incidents involving interpersonal racism in the workplace reinforces psychological safety and well-being when issues are satisfactorily reported, addressed, and resolved. As previously mentioned, the Well-Being and Attendance Policy focuses on monitoring staff attendance and does not enhance staff psychological safety. Moreover, the current Employee Assistance Program (EAP) does not inquire about nor validate staff experiences involving racial discrimination—nor was it designed to do so (Kendi, 2019). Instead, it seeks to appropriate

‘one size fits all’ narrative to a variety of social issues and problems. The distress, anger, depression, anxiety, and fatigue caused by racial abuse and its effects are regrettably unattended within the EAP support framework support (Kendi, 2019). Thus, there are currently no existing mechanisms to assess, evaluate, and manage racial abuse. Instead, as previously described, current anti-harassment policies press people who experience racism to talk directly to the same colleagues who perpetuate it. Thus, school leaders must challenge these approaches in order to rectify inequitable gaps in service delivery. Ideally, the OIP will serve as an impetus for the DGL school board to redesign current policies and provide comprehensive resources to better support racialized employees.

Question # 3. What practices and procedures create and maintain structural, systemic discrimination and oppression?

Currently, DGL is developing several initiatives that seek to advance equity and mental health. However, the success of these initiatives—which, by their nature, challenge the dominant ideology and culture—rely on the commitment of senior leaders to critically examine the institutional environment and current structures of the school board itself (Hurley & Taiwo, 2019). Research shows:

When working to combat institutional oppression, it’s essential to understand that advocating for policy change is only half of the work that needs to be done. If the work of shifting internalized norms isn’t also done, then updating policy might not have a significant impact on institutional culture (Wells, 2020, p. 244)

In this change-initiative, there is a risk that DGL will only provide enough support to meet the minimum expectations and requirements of the Ministry of Education’s forthcoming data reporting requirements—this would be an obstacle for any change project. If this were to happen, the lack of commitment to social justice would not produce the meaningful or transformative change necessary to improve the organizational culture for racialized employees.

Additionally, one of the constraints of this OIP is that it carries a high level of emotional risk for many stakeholders due to the nature of the PoP. Racialized staff have long

waited for more equitable and anti-racist practices; yet the challenge with this type of transformation is that its success largely depends on the dominant group's willingness and ability to change. Indeed, in the context of the DGL school board, the success of the project depends on school leaders to examine their own position of racial privilege in order to understand why this project is needed. This process can unsettle personal beliefs while provoking potential resistance to change, participation, and engagement. As Wojcik (2021) notes, "another layer of this problem is that it comes from a system that does not allow teachers [support and professional staff] to discourse on their needs" (p.19). Thus, if seniors' leaders and school' leaders demonstrate insufficient commitment to the initiative, racialized staff will likely experience even further harm as a result of continued inaction. Finally, another constraint to consider is the impact of staffing levels and school principals' limited capacity to participate as significant stakeholders in this OIP. Principals—especially in Ontario French-language boards—frequently have insufficient staff to cover sick and personal days when employees are absent; this often requires them to cover for missing staff. Consequently, they may have limited availability to devote to other projects.

The next section articulates the change vision, priorities, and change drivers by describing how leadership can function as a mechanism to increase psychological safety in the organization.

Leadership-focused Vision for Change

Below, I describe the current state of mental health support available to DGL staff. I then outline the desired OIP alongside its internal and external drivers of change.

Current State

The current dearth of licenced teachers in Ontario's public education system is connected to the historical legacy of racial discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion of Black and Indigenous bodies in the system (Thompson, 2020). For example, the non-recognition of credentials issued outside Western countries perpetuates this pattern of discrimination and denies the system access to qualified candidates (Osaze, 2017). Not only does the DGL school board lack the tools and processes to address racial discrimination and

microaggressions, but the race-based stress that non-white staff experience is often invisible and unaddressed (Jay, 2009). Indeed, Barco (2016) posits that “the experience of being unheard and marginalized then becomes a gap between peoples who experience oppression” (p.13) and their access to an adequate support system under the dominant Western worldview.

Envisioned Future

Given the current state of the DGL school board, this OIP seeks to create an inclusive and responsive mental health framework that better addresses racialized staff’s well-being. Broadly, this requires a working environment that is open to race-conscious and equity-minded strategies; thus, my leadership vision for change is centred around allyship as a transformative strategy that can leverage the symbolic capital of key stakeholders. Notably, De Turk (2011) defines symbolic capital as the positional, social power or privilege that enable individuals to speak out against injustice towards disadvantaged individuals or groups. In this way, allyship—in which white counterparts use their symbolic capital to denounce discrimination and promote anti-racist initiatives—is one way that leaders at all levels of the organization can advance change.

To this end, school leaders, refers in this OIP as, principals and managers are essential partners and potential allies because of their influence over current change processes in the organization. As previously discussed, I approach this OIP from the position of a servant leader. Thus, I intend to support stakeholders' capacity and willingness to develop an anti-racist identity (De Turk, 2011; Erskine & Bilimoria, 2019). My monthly meetings with managers—combined with regular and on-going consultations with principals—provide coaching opportunities in which I can offer support and help administrators to develop and strengthen their allyship, competencies, and self-efficacy (Erskine & Bilimoria, 2019). While allyship cannot be the sole stimulus to address racial equity demands, Erskine and Bilimoria (2019) assert that white allyships—when they are founded on a shared vision of accountability and responsibility—can be supportive relationships in enacting change. In the context of DGL, these partnerships can transform

internal processes related to staff well-being and create more equitable structures that better support racialized educators' mental health.

A productive allyship requires school leaders to engage authentically and substantively, a process involving self-awareness, a commitment to continuous learning, and an understanding of how intersecting identities such as race and gender can either impede or stimulate a collective sense of “we” within DGL (Crenshaw, 1989; Erskine & Bilimoria, 2019). In using their own racial privilege as ally to promote equity, it is imperative that school leaders move beyond performative allyship to be accomplices in meaningful anti-racist actions.

In this way, allyships can increase organizational accountability, confront racism, and challenge the status quo at all levels. At the same time, this accountability lays the groundwork for continuous organizational and social changes that can extend even beyond the original scope of OIP (Erskine & Bilimoria, 2019). This is because allyship behaviours nurture a proactive organizational culture that enhances educational leaders' commitment to social justice (Lopez, 2016). In the context of management, allies can also encourage educators to engage in pro-social behaviours that nurture growth and connections within their teams. In turn, management styles that apply an anti-racist lens tend to result in more equitable and responsive practices for all staff. Thus, as Erskine & Bilimoria (2019) explain, allyship behaviours can also improve staff and team relationships and increase job performance.

Priorities for Change

A priority in this OIP is to increase senior leaders' i.e., human resources director and the superintendent leadership team, awareness, and recognition of the impact of racial discrimination on racialized employees' mental health as both a pressing problem and an opportunity for change. In building readiness to change, it is crucial to first dismantle inequities before instigating system-wide changes (Porter, 2021). This echoes Galloway and Ishimaru's (2020)-assertion that “individuals' hearts and minds need to first change before engaging in other actions related to organizational change” (p.120). Thus, all change agents

in this project—including myself—must first establish the right organizational conditions with the current DGL senior leadership team focused on safety, trust, collaboration, and a sense of supportive community.

A second priority is to support stakeholders in developing a shared understanding and the necessary language (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010). Since numerous terminologies exist in equity and social justice discourse, Porter (2021) recommends that administrators, managers, and principals develop a shared understanding of equity and social justice terms. This not only improves efficiency, but also increases management's ability to coordinate actions that address inequities entrenched in policies and practices. Thus, a collective understanding will move the change team closer to advancing an equity-focused mental health framework. This collective vision will be developed throughout a specific leadership framework, which I will discuss in further detail in Chapter 2.

As a servant leader, my third priority is to increase lateral communication among stakeholders to support allyship partnerships, build trust for racialized staff to share their stories, and promote well-being initiatives. Improving lateral communication contributes to group cohesion, harmonizing standards of practice and organizational commitment (Bartels et al., 2010); additionally, it encourages managers and principals to work together. In so doing, school leaders can exert influence on senior leadership's decision-making processes in ways that are beneficial and favourable to the collective.

External Change Drivers

As previously discussed, the current sociopolitical context is creating significant pressures and challenges for the government, policymakers, and district school boards to respond to shifting demographics with a genuine commitment to anti-racism. Over the past several decades, waves of immigration have diversified the field of education (Lopez, 2016). Moreover, interest groups such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Parents of Black Children (PoBC) are driving change by demanding transparency and accountability (Nasser, 2021). In this political climate, diversity presents new learning opportunities. Recent advocacy

campaigns not only seek to reform the educational system, but also to hold schools accountable (Lopez, 2016).

The Ministry of Education is another external change driver in this organizational context, largely because its forthcoming 2023 equity guidelines will challenge school leaders to develop new approaches that engage and respond to diversity in meaningful ways (Lopez, 2016). However, it is important to ensure that school boards like DGL conform to these new data reporting standards with the same spirit in which these initiatives were introduced. If this data reporting is done only to fulfil a mandate, then it will not result in either meaningful or lasting change within the institution. Thus, the overall success of the OIP also depends on leaders to 'buy into' the need for change.

Internal Change Drivers

The aforementioned external change drivers contribute to meaning making and accountability processes that solidify their role as key stakeholders in this OIP. However, internally, human resources management is responsible for supporting staff's psychological well-being. Thus, human resources management's leadership and commitment to change can similarly promote a positive attitude in organizational culture with respect to views about race. Indeed, a large body of research shows a consistent correlation between organizational culture, work-related stress, and mental health (Sisask et al., 2014).

Within the organization, human resources management must consider racialized staff's morale and past employees' reasons for leaving the organization. Since feedback on newly implemented anti-racism training indicates that many employees desire more support, resources, and even more on-going training in these topics, it is important for human resources management to develop and deliver this training using a comprehensive and multi-levelled approach (Husband, 2016). Indeed, research suggests that anti-racist initiatives only yield long-term results when they are developed in a meaningful way (Husband, 2016). As a knowledge broker in this change process, I will assist human resources management in reviewing and analyzing anti-racist strategies and initiatives that promote change at the individual, interpersonal, and structural levels.

Organizational Change Readiness

Before implementing change requires that I assess DGL readiness for change (Holt et al., 2007). To this end, I use Deszca et al.'s (2020) questionnaire titled 'Rate the Organization's Readiness' (see Appendix B) to analyze factors that promote and inhibit change readiness in the DGL school board. In supporting change champions to take the appropriate course of action (Deszca et al., 2020), this tool rates DGL's readiness for change through the following six dimensions: the organization's previous change experiences; executive support; credible leadership and change champions; openness to change; rewards for change; measures for change; and, finally, accountability.

Previous Change Experience

Deszca et al.'s (2020) research finds that organizations with negative change experiences tend to be more resistant to further changes, possibly due to disillusionment. Conversely, positive change experiences set the right conditions that increase change readiness. In both scenarios, past change experiences significantly impact the organization's temperament, enthusiasm and spirit when implementing new projects and initiatives for change.

Due to its cultural and linguistic minority context, DGL has recently demonstrated a renewed capacity to adapt and navigate socio-cultural changes. For example, the organization was very recently responsive in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, DGL stood out as a leader in the Francophone community by migrating swiftly to virtual learning combined with a student support model.

Executive Support

Future changes are particularly influenced by the executive support that senior leaders at the very top of the organization provide (Deszca et al., 2020). Executive support also influences the extent to which senior leaders depend on the changes being successful, determine the conditions in which leaders support the change, and finally, identify strategies to overcome obstacles when they occur (Deszca et al., 2020).

Separate from this OIP, upper management's involvement is crucial to achieving the Ministry of Education's targets. In fact, senior leadership at DGL is instrumental in helping the school board adopt practices that promote inclusion, diversity, and equity resulting from this data collection. Currently, there seems to be broad-level support among upper-level management with respect to equity work. Thus, other factors that may foster support for this change initiative is the competitive nature of the field of education in spearheading innovative policies and protocols. For instance, the DGL board has already created a new equity and human rights position, which seemingly affirms their current commitment to equity and anti-racism.

Credible Leadership and Change Champions

The dimension of credible leadership and change champions in the readiness assessment tool evaluating whether senior leaders are trusted and have the confidence to show others how to achieve their collective goals. Specifically, credible leadership relates to how the organization attracts, supports, and retains change agents in meaningful ways (Deszca et al., 2020). Given the global COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 and 2021 challenged DGL with respect to stability in upper-level leadership due to successive waves of turnover, departures, and retirements. This situation has undoubtedly shaken the staff's trust and willingness to participate in upper management-level projects. With a new senior leadership team now in place, the organization is working again towards strengthening trusting relationships with its members. This renewed executive team intends to work more closely with middle management to better connect upper-level leaders with the rest of the organization. Additionally, the new team is seemingly more open to change and will likely view the proposed change plan as both appropriate and beneficial for the organization.

As noted, various elements influence openness to change, including both internal and external factors (Deszca et al., 2020). Thus, the organization must be able to recognize the interdependence of both internal and external factors. Questions that change champions must consider include: Will the proposed change be viewed as necessary? Will it be seen positively by those not in senior leadership positions? Do affected individuals or groups

believe that they have the necessary energy to undertake the proposed change? Will staff members responsible for the project rollout have access to resources to support the change? Finally, will employees be able to express concerns and receive support from the new leadership team?

In developing any new policy or initiative, DGL conducts external and internal consultations to scan and monitor emerging needs. Additionally, DGL collects data and information on student and employee well-being every two years. They also seek community input and feedback on programs. Thus, comparing data between years can help to identify shifting and emergent trends and patterns. Moreover, data collection helps establish priorities that inform strategic planning. Due to the prevalence of social justice and equity issues in education, change is generally viewed positively by those affected by the change. Contextually, for the DGL, harnessing a sense of solidarity might be a challenge that will take longer than in other organizations. This is due, in part, to change fatigue as staff adjust to new upper leadership, as well as the cumulative exhaustion of frontline staff who have been impacted by staff shortages and increased demands during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reward for Change

Broadly, the reward for change dimension concerns whether the organization has a reward system that values innovation and change; it also considers whether people are censured for pushing changes and voicing disagreement (Dezsca et al., 2020). In the DGL school board, existing reward systems are aimed at the student body and chiefly concerned with eco-friendly initiatives. To the extent that ideas for change are supported by leadership, employees are generally encouraged to make change initiatives –it is important to note that DGL does not have a formal reward program for change or innovation. A strong reward dimension is essential when advocating for change because it opens the door to new possibilities. For instance, it enables the organization to reward educators for sharing their input and collaborating in the change process. Similarly, it can also promote the interests and views of multiple stakeholders from within, reinforcing the importance of diverse participation given the fragility and emotionally charged rhetoric of subjects such as racism.

Measures for Change and Accountability

These two final dimensions—measures for change and accountability—evaluate whether there are good measurement and monitoring tools to assess change, track progress, and analyze the collected data. This dimension is also concerned with measuring and evaluating satisfaction with the change and determining whether the organization can steward additional resources to meet scheduled deadlines that will make or break the project's success.

Notably, DGL has monitoring and evaluation tools—such as the previously discussed satisfaction survey conducted every two years—and uses other monitoring tools as mandated by the Ministry of Education. These tools include disaggregated data collection used for assuring equitable learning outcomes, a relatively new expectation from the external change driver. Regrettably, no measurement tool assesses staff mental health and well-being as they relate to the impact of racism and racial discrimination.

Score

Based on the dimensions established by Dezsca et al. (2020)'s rating tool, paired with my knowledge of the organization in my role as a manager of Social Work Services, I can score the organization's readiness for a change. In this framework, scores can range from -25 to +50; a score of >10 means that the organization is not ready for change, or—at minimum—that change will be challenging to achieve. Based on my assessment, I score the DGL's readiness for change at 22.

With a score of 22, I believe that DGL is well-positioned for change.—This readiness is also based on recent equity initiatives, such as new anti-racist training and the Equity Network, both of which have questioned the status quo over the past year, thereby creating an organizational openness to change. Organizational readiness is also heavily contingent on stakeholders' just and equitable participation, which presently exists in the DGL organizational culture.

Nevertheless, a potential barrier in enacting change at DGL is the perception of inequitable procedural justice. Broadly, procedural justice is the extent to which participants

see the process as ethical, moral, and equitable; it also ensures that employees have equitable opportunities to participate and influence outcomes (Ruano-Chamorro et al., 2021; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Procedural justice is a significant factor in perceived legitimacy (Ruano-Chamorro et al., 2021) as it relates to organizational change. Thus, I strongly encourage DGL leaders to consider procedural justice before enacting any changes because it “influences emotions, attitudes, with important implications for subjective well-being and people's behaviour, especially in group settings” (Ruano-Chamorro et al., 2021, p. 2). As a servant leader, I can also increase staff members’ perceptions of fairness by establishing ethical standards and developing high-quality relationships with key stakeholders (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Promoting procedural justice is also essential in promoting decolonizing practices that include traditional systems of knowledge (Ruano-Chamorro et al., 2021), a further component of anti-racist initiatives.

Chapter Summary

In sum, the first chapter of this OIP introduced the problem of practice, located in the context of a French-language Ontario public school board that needs to better address its educators’ mental health and well-being from an equity, social justice, and anti-racist perspective. Consequently, this OIP combines critical race theory (CRT) with an anti-oppressive social work lens, which collectively inform its assumptions and beliefs within the many stages of this project. CRT is the theoretical lens that frames the PoP with relevant literature and research about racialized educators’ mental health. The unique organizational framework of the Des Grand Lacs (DGL) school board provides both unique challenges, as well as opportunities in implementing future changes.

This chapter also describes questions that emerged from the PoP, all of which will shape the change process. My focus on leadership centres allyship as a transformative strategy with high accountability. By positioning the OIP within the existing organizational culture of the DGL school board, I also provide a comprehensive assessment for change readiness based on both internal and external environmental forces. This analysis reveals that despite some challenges, DGL and its leadership are ready for change. Serving in a dual

role as both a change agent and a servant leader, this readiness for change leverages my paid employment with the DGL school board in providing leadership and guidance to DGL leaders throughout the multi-faceted change-process. Further specifics of the change-process are subsequently described in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

The first chapter of this OIP articulated a change vision centered on allyship as a leadership strategy for school leaders in the Des Grands Lacs (DGL) school board to advance EDI initiatives and combat racial discrimination. The second chapter, following below, advances this framework by describing how different leadership frameworks and theories will be used to propel change, specifically, it outlines additional opportunities for senior leadership and school leaders to acquire language to better understand the impact of discrimination on racialized staff's well-being.

In this chapter, I provide a critical analysis that would inform the urgency behind this required change by aligning proposed solutions with the current practices, policies, and organizational culture at DGL as they relate to the problem of practice (PoP). Specifically, I argue that change agents need an in-depth understanding of the planning and development stages of the OIP as a prerequisite in order to successfully implement any chosen solution. Since stakeholders' (senior leaders, school leaders, and staff) ongoing commitment to the proposed changes is critical to their success, I also provide a variety of communication strategies to support the change-process at various stages. The chapter concludes with a discussion about DGL's ethical responsibilities and potential challenges that stakeholders may experience during this change-process.

Leadership Approaches to Changes

Successful organizational change requires strong leadership to inspire commitment to the proposed changes, chiefly by creating a vision that inspires stakeholders' buy-in. Given the current organizational culture at DGL, a fusion of three leadership styles is the most likely to compel change: transformative leadership (Shields, 2020), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; Spears, 2002; van Dierendonck, 2011), and Ubuntu leadership (Elkington, 2020; Ncube, 2010). Together these leadership styles—transformative, servant, and Ubuntu—compromise the acronym TSUL; I have amalgamated these leadership frameworks owing to their shared foundation in participative leadership, which include cooperation,

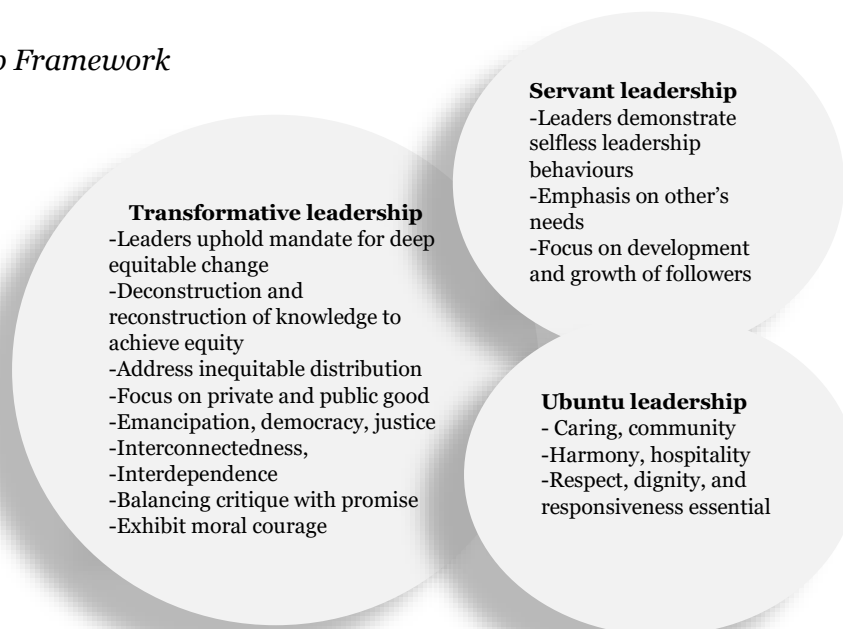
collaboration, and accountability. Additionally, they each promote professional growth which forms a requisite part of any transformative organizational change.

I adopt TSUL in my own leadership approach; it is, thus, from lived experience that I believe TSUL demonstrates what school leadership should look like when leaders seek to practice and support equity within the school board. As such, wider adoption of TSUL among senior leadership and school leaders can enable a space with opportunities for racialized staff to voice their concerns, feel understood, and heard, and receive appreciation (Panaccio et al., 2015).

As shown below in Figure 1, TSUL is a person-centered framework that increases leaders' awareness, communication skills, and emotional healing. TSUL encourages leaders to make themselves readily available to the staff, provide encouragement, and create a working environment that supports staff personal growth (Northouse, 2019).

Figure 2

Leadership Framework



For example, termly communications from human resources management and senior leadership can provide a forum to engage the staff about their needs and concerns and enable a vision for change. This communication would also promote staff engagement to actively contribute in the DGL organizational efforts to achieve equity.

In so doing, TSUL encourages organizational-wide democracy and collaboration which can be harnessed to support systemic change. Below, I will further describe the key components of TSUL and its applicability to the DGL context.

Transformative Leadership

Although there are many leadership styles, Shields (2020) proposes that the transformative model is particularly valuable because of its emphasis on achieving equity, social justice, and democracy through advocacy and activism (Caldwell et al., 2012; Shields et al., 2018). Within this model, leaders' commitment to any proposed changes are crucial to challenge the neutrality of the status quo. In essence, this transformative model would hinge on perpetuating an equitable working space, actively eliminating the white heteronormative framework which often only leads to epistemic and systemic injustices (Tilghman-Havens, 2020).

In the specific context of the DGL school board, senior and school leaders must demonstrate their ongoing commitment to meaningful equitable change as insidious and covert forms of racism are deeply embedded within the education system (James & Turner, 2017). The literature found has-validated the negative correlation between prejudice and mental health. Even when racism is not overt, racialized staff experience commonly racial microaggressions, which can include behaviours—both explicit and implicit, as well as verbal and non-verbal—that nevertheless exclude, invalidate, and/or nullify minority groups (Weiner et al., 2021). These behaviours are also inherently ambiguous leading to overt self-reflexivity and consequent duress for the racialized groups in the workplace. Since microaggressions are experienced by racialized folks, they are generally unnoticed by members of the dominant group—such as senior leadership. Additionally, Weiner et al. (2021) note the tendency for racialized staff to receive harsher critique and negative feedback regarding their leadership capabilities compared to white colleagues—Jay's (2009) research offers similar suggestions which probe alternating feelings of hyper-visibility and invisibility is a common experience of microaggression. My own work experience at DGL validates this research finding; as previously noted, my role at DGL often invites colleagues to confide in

me—particularly racialized colleagues. To this end, some staff at DGL do perceive that they are ignored in white-dominant spaces, especially when their presence is unacknowledged. In other contexts, racialized staff feel overtly self-conscious when they experience microaggressions, which include changes in tone of voice and non-verbal communication; as these actions implicitly invalidate the racialized colleagues' viewpoint or perspective. Unfortunately, minority staff often feel that they lack the institutional support required to challenge these forms of racism, which thereby deplete racialized staff of both physical and psychological energy (Jay, 2009). In addition to negatively impacting job performance, it can also diminish career aspirations and the desire to engage in professional development.

As a change agent in this project, I will center my own influence and agency as a transformative leader. Specifically, as Shields (2020) recommends, I engage in respectful dialogue with senior leadership, human resource management, and school leaders to help uncover implicit bias in their assumptions, particularly with respect to the fallacy of “race neutrality” on certain realities that may influence senior leadership’s decision-making process. As with colourblind ideology, a race neutral view denies racism and prevents one from seeing the patterns of inequities and the capacity to address unconscious beliefs (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Race neutrality is another weapon in the arsenal of white systemic violence that not only negates race and racialized experiences, but also overlooks any racial injustice by the ‘virtue’ of denying race itself. Ultimately, I will use my platform and position to ask two central questions. Whom do decisions have the potential to include or exclude? Whose voices are heard and whose are silenced? (Shields, 2020). These questions will help reveal existing power structures and demonstrate the need for senior and school leaders at DGL to adopt a more democratic and participative leadership style—such as TSUL— which supports equity from the bottom-up by sharing power and participation in future decision-making (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2020).

Servant Leadership

As Beazley (2003) explains, servant leadership is “neither a set of procedures on how to lead well, nor a quick-fix method, but a state of mind, a philosophy of life, a way of being”

(p. 10). Indeed, a focal point of servant leadership is the leader's responsiveness to others' needs and well-being (Northouse, 2019). To this end, Spears (2010) identifies ten key servant leadership behaviours: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. In the context of addressing the demands and challenges related to racial inequity, senior and school leaders' adoption of these characteristics can help respond both, more appropriately and sensitively (Fernandez, 2018).

As a change agent and servant leader myself, I will emphasize conceptualization, listening, and stewardship in helping key stakeholders gain new understanding of this multi-faceted PoP. Greenleaf and Spears (2002) states that “we do not see the world around us. We see the world we are prepared to see” (p. 354). Consequently, I will also model and teach the practice of active listening to help increase management's awareness of potential 'blind spots', such as the current lack of formal structures and safe spaces to protect racialized employees in the DGL school board. This is important because the crux of all equity initiatives is the need for all staff—but especially those of colour—to feel valued, empowered, and connected to the broader district community (Northouse, 2019).

Critics of servant leader leadership have argued that it lacks conceptual and theoretical grounding (Nayab, 2010; van Dierendonck, 2011). Accordingly, some may argue that this approach is too ineffectual for the broad changes identified in this project's PoP. However, I believe that servant leadership is, in fact, well-suited for equity initiatives because of its broader commitment to ethics, social consciousness, and a sense of responsibility towards the underprivileged, marginalized, and disadvantaged (Northouse, 2019).

Ubuntu Leadership

For these reasons, servant leadership aligns well with the Ubuntu leadership model. Specifically, Ubuntu challenges traditional Western leadership views with a polyocular approach that validates and endorses diverse viewpoints and voices (Ncube, 2010). As a postcolonial South African ethical and collective leadership philosophy, Ubuntu “holds

promise for a more inclusive discourse that embraces historically misinterpreted and marginalized non-Western traditions” (Ncube, 2010, p.49). Indeed, ‘humaneness’ is at the core of Ubuntu. In this way, Ubuntu is inextricably tied to values of respect, dignity, community, and acceptance. This approach is important because meaningful change in this OIP will require senior and school leaders to hold cross-racial conversations because challenging ideologies of colorblindness, meritocracy, and individualism has a tendency to produce tension and induce intense emotional reactions (DiAngelo, 2016). Although Aliye (2020) points out that any collective stance has the potential to lead to groupthink, van Binsbergen (2001) conversely finds that the Ubuntu construct of interdependence is well-suited for this type of change process precisely because of its emphasis on social justice and anti-racism. Put differently, this shift in the lens can help leaders overcome the same tensions and conflict that the change-process induces.

As illustrated in Appendix C, Ncube (2010) proposes that Ubuntu participatory leadership is best illustrated using a circular and inclusive model underpinned by six tenets embedded in values of truthfulness, compassion, empathy, and respect for others. These tenets overlap with servant leadership in their shared cultivation of reciprocal relationships focused on togetherness and conviviality. Furthermore, Ubuntu’s connectedness and solidarity are also consistent with the transformative approach's emphasis on participatory decision making. As a change agent, my own goal is to engage participants by focusing on our shared human experiences, thereby fostering on-going and interconnected communication (Ncube, 2010). Nurturing interdependence also promotes cooperation and teamwork, which will offer support to stakeholders—including DGL leadership—to take risks, challenge norms, and engage in critical reflection and self-inquiry.

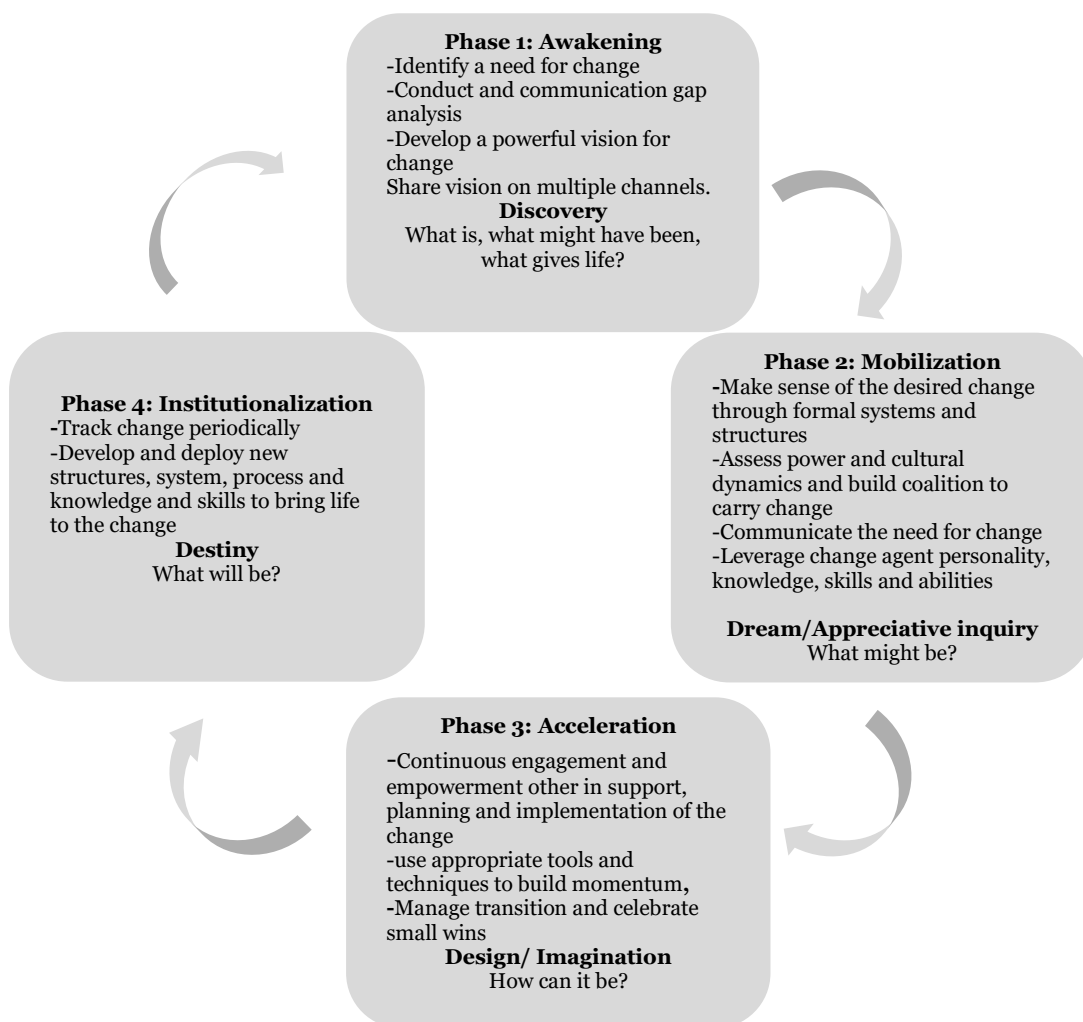
Framework for Leading the Change Process

In addition to these leadership approaches, this change process also requires several implementation frameworks and theories. The forthcoming section delves into these frameworks. Specifically, Figure 2, below, combines Deszca et al. (2020)’s Change Path Model (CPM) is designed around four stages: awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and

institutionalization. The application of CPM with Cooperrider and Whitney's (2000) 4D Appreciative Inquiry (AI) four steps model that consist of: discovery, dream, design, and destiny. Critical Appreciative Process (CAP) model, as originally designed by Grant & Humphries (2006) and later updated by Ridley-Duff & Duncan (2015), is combined to AI to bring a critical, reflexive lens to view social phenomenon. Therefore, CPM and CAP will be used to guide the implementation plan.

Figure 3

Blended Models of Change Path Model and Critical Appreciative Process



Note: Deszca, G., Ingols, C., Cawsey, T. F. (2020). *Organizational change: An action-oriented toolkit* (4th ed.) Sage Publications.

Ridley-Duff, & Duncan, G. (2015). What is critical appreciation? Insights from studying the critical turn in an appreciative inquiry. *Human Relations*, 68(10), 1579–1599.

Broadly, the key advantage of this combined change model is that it promotes stakeholder participation and creates space for active engagement with each stage of the change implementation. Notably, the CPM model seeks to blend both process and prescription at every stage (Deszca et al., 2020). Equally, CAP is a generative learning process that illustrates the importance of inquiry and critical theory in self-reflective processes that foster appreciation for the complexity of human experiences (Grant & Humphries, 2006). CAP also acknowledges structural disparities that leads to alienation and “[recognize] how power may be mediated through the specific use of language” (Grant & Humphries, 2006, p. 407).

Notably, a more recent version of the model integrates a fifth D: an initial “define” precedes the original Ds—discovery, dream, design, and destiny—and clarifies the project’s purpose and topic of inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008). However, I have opted to rely on the original 4D model since this definition stage is already included in the awakening phase of the OIP. Although I considered other potential frameworks for this OIP, they each had limitations relative to the proposed change vision. For instance, Lewin’s unfreeze-change-refreeze model and Kotter’s (2012) eight-step model are less flexible than this CPM model. Kotter’s model is a top-down, leader-focused approach that offers limited bottom-up participation. Although it is an excellent approach for initiating change, it “lacks [the] rigorous fundamentals” important for this specific PoP, which emphasizes the need for flexibility and social justice throughout (Appelbaum et al., 2012, p. 765).

Phase 1: Awakening - Discovery/Critical Inquiry

The first implementation phase is titled awakening because it identifies the necessary change and confirms that the problem requires a larger organizational analysis and data gathering. This analysis is an important first step in providing DGL senior leaders—such as the superintendent leadership team and human resources director—with a clear understanding of organizational dynamics, including both internal and external factors (Deszca et al., 2020). Thus, this assessment not only encourages curiosity, but also raises senior leaders' awareness about the importance of the proposed changes. A comprehensive

gap analysis, hence, must “take account of unseen but important factors such as organizational culture and trust, which are key aspects of the organizational context that can profoundly influence policies” (Erasmus et al., 2017, p. 1).

Crucially, the CAP model encourages open-ended questions in the discovery step that can create opportunities for all DGL staff to reflect on how current practices and policies either support or harm their mental health. Further, it encourages employees to openly discuss what the organization can do, or should do, and what future changes could or should be avoided. All in all, these questions encourage participants to engage storytelling in which they ‘tell it like it is’, which is an essential process in exposing hidden personal experiences within the organization (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015). To this end, the CAP discovery component focuses on the use of discourse, language, and self-reflection to engage stakeholders in deconstructive methods of critical inquiry that generate data and “open up toward multiple possibilities, the co-existence of multiple social realities, ethics and power” (Grant & Humphries, 2006, p. 405).

By their very nature, the CAP questions induce self-reflection. In the context of DGL, this is important so as to increase senior leaders’ understanding of the negative impact of colonial education system on racialized staff’ mental health; indeed, this awareness is—as previously discussed—a crucial first step prior in exploring new perspectives (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015). Consequently, this OIP proposes that senior DGL leadership adopt a transformative leadership style informed by a critical race theory (CRT) lens precisely because of its ability to bring to the fore the intersection of privilege and power. Gaining the input of diverse stakeholders, including administrative and support staff, teachers, and principals, managers, and senior leaders is important to best understand the gap between the current and envisioned future state at DGL (Deszca et al., 2020). Including multiple perspectives also ensures that change leaders correctly diagnose the problem guiding the intervention and implementation framework (Zins & Illback, 2007). Finally, senior leaders must act transparently by sharing the data and gap analysis findings to all stakeholders

through multiple channels to raise awareness, create a sense of urgency, and build organizational readiness for change (Deszca et al., 2020).

Phase 2: Mobilization - Dream/Appreciative Inquiry

Following the completion of the aforementioned organizational analysis, the DGL school board should enter the second phase—mobilization—with a strong understanding of the organizational problem, a clear target and desired outcomes, and strategies to mitigate and leverage both internal and external factors (Deszca et al., 2020). At this juncture, the mobilization stage is essential to gauge and leverage the formal structures and systems necessary to create widespread support for the proposed changes, including the formation of a coalition required to implement change at various levels of the organization (Descza et al., 2020). At this stage, the change-team should include staff members from human resource management, myself as a knowledge broker, the mental health leader, the equity and human rights officer, as well as the human resources director acting in a supervisory role. The inclusion of the CAP dream phase further invites participants and stakeholders to provide constructive feedback that highlights new possibilities for all stakeholders (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015).

In this phase, the DGL senior leadership team including superintendents, human resources management, and principals are key stakeholders because they must promote the change-vision and mobilize participants for action. By the virtue of their institutional positions, upper management holds a disproportionate amount of power in this stage since they control the resources required to implement the proposed changes (Abramovitz & Blitz, 2015; Deszca et al., 2019). Consequently, Abramovitz & Blitz (2015) posit that influential persons concerned with advancing racial equity have a special responsibility to champion and drive change efforts. Thus, in my own capacity as a change agent, I will promote a CRT lens to support DGL leaders as they assess existing power structures and promote buy-ins.

Phase 3: Acceleration- Design/Imagination

The acceleration phase focuses on building momentum by continuous engagement and by empowerment of stakeholders by implementing the change-vision and developing a

robust communication plan. As a member of the change-team, I will help identify the internal networks and communication mediums best suited to disseminate the change-vision, while also continuing to engage stakeholders and participants in questions and storytelling so that new possibilities and alternative ways of challenging the status quo can continue to emerge (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015). Within this phase, the change team must also encourage staff through all departments and services to share successes and challenges, celebrate and promote wins. Change agents will need to communicate milestones and achievements to sustain participants interest and strengthen their engagement and commitment to change (Deszca et al., 2020).

A cultural mapping tool such as a concept map, or a mindmap, is particularly applicable to this stage because that would enable the change team to better visualize the cultural context, and subcultures, and to better understand “how and why the organization operates as it does” (Deszca et al., 2020). In particular, it will help the change-team make visible the ways in which the dominant culture may resist the proposed changes and then design potential solutions to mitigate this resistance. Finally, this tool can also assess how stakeholders can facilitate the change process by either embracing or limiting certain cultural practices in the proposed change-framework (Deszca et al., 2020).

Phase 4: Institutionalization/Destiny

In the final stage of the change-vision, a workplace culture based on accountability demands that all stakeholders increase their capacity to learn from each other and share responsibility for the implementation of the change-plan (Fullan, 2019). As new practices are anchored within the school board culture, senior leaders can set short-term goals that promote dialogue and storytelling; this promotes the success of the change vision, particularly with respect to the organization’s adaptability and innovation. Put differently, “[positive] feedback from executive leadership regarding employees’ racial equity work and interest from both leaders and colleagues are all associated with organizational progress” (Abramovitz & Blitz, 2015, p. 108).

To support a new cycle of change and fully institutionalize it, I will encourage the change-team to focus beyond short-term gains toward a philosophical shift in thinking that entrenches collaboration as the norm within shared corporate values (Small et al., 2016). The change team will also assess, monitor, and analyze findings to determine potential process improvements (Deszca et al., 2020). This may result in inviting new collaborators with the knowledge and skills to build readiness for change (Deszca et al., 2020). Additionally, the change-team may choose to form new partnerships with third-party community agencies that engage in mental health and anti-racist work.

Notably, CPM/CAP constructionist views are based on collaboration, generative communication, and egalitarian dialogue which align with the TSUL emphasis on broad collaborative changes (Hung et al., 2018) Specifically, generative communication facilitates open-ended dialogue, which further supports the critical reflection required by stakeholders and participants seeking to challenge the status quo. Combined, the leadership and change-frameworks work together to challenge dominant power discussed in Chapter 3 will use CPM/CAP and TSUL to empower all stakeholders as leaders of change, explore innovative and culturally responsive practices, and drive meaningful institutional change throughout the organization.

The Nature of Change

Broadly, this OIP addresses the lack of comprehensive support for racialized staff's well-being. As previously stated, the existing Well-Being and Attendance Policy, as well as the Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy, are imbricated with racial inequities. Although DGL offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), it is time-limited and thereby—by design—provides insufficient support for chronic stressors, such as the impact of trauma, racism, and oppression on employees' overall mental health and well-being. Thus, this OIP proposes a type of change involving turning and redirecting (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). In this context, turning describes an incremental change that favours internal alignment. This internal redirection emphasizes servant leadership, particularly within the management team. In adopting servant leadership, leaders must emphasize individuals and

sub-systems within the organization, de-centralize and unprioritized the administrator's role, empowering frontline staff from the bottom-up. In this way, redirecting implies a radical, strategic, and frame-bending shift that offers refreshing insights and guidance within the organization (Deszca et al., 2020)

This type of change also requires senior management to act with a sense of urgency in recognition of the fact that the status quo can no longer be tolerated or accepted as the norm (Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Deszca et al., 2020). Nevertheless, even radical changes are best deployed incrementally. A process of incremental change—even when the intended outcomes are radical—is important because it ensures that the changes can gradually and meaningfully be instilled within broader workplace norms (Deszca et al., 2020). Moreover, redirecting change requires strong leadership commitment and a compelling vision to create this shift in organizational culture. Ultimately, this change-vision in this OIP seeks to accomplish radical goals, identify, and dismantle racial discrimination, and counter the normalization of racism within the DGL school board's cultural and institutional norms, policies, and practices.

Critical Organizational Analysis

Leaders must first analyze the organizational problem to best understand which processes need to change and how to best to enact these changes (Deszca et al., 2020). Thus, an organizational analysis highlights internal and external factors and their broader impact within the district, the school board, and long-term strategic planning. Specifically, it seeks to identify gaps and increase leaders' understanding of the root causes and hidden forces underpinning the PoP (Deszca et al., 2020). Each of these factors, respectively, can create pressures, demands, and constraints; yet, they can also provide opportunities for development and growth (Deszca et al., 2020). The change team, thus, must understand the intersection of these factors from the onset of the change plan in order to ensure that the implementation plan will succeed in producing desirable outcomes (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). In the context of this OIP, an organizational analysis integrates research with change readiness through a comprehensive examination of the institution's various components.

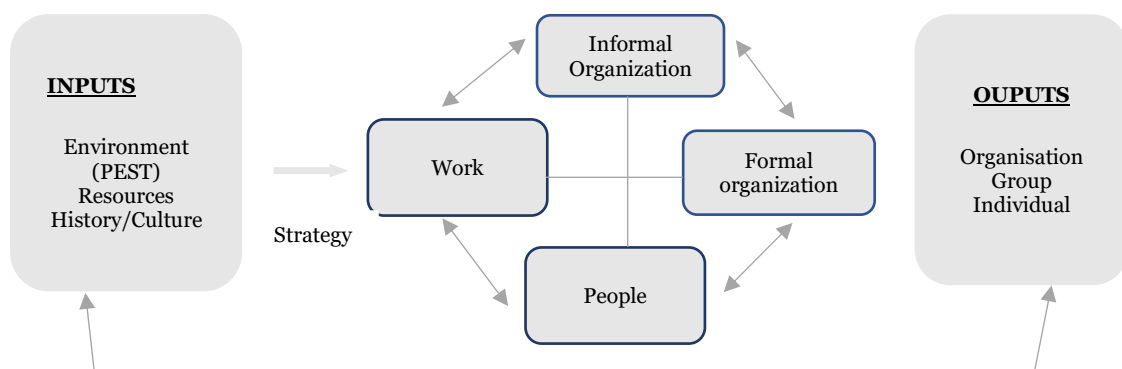
In Chapter 1, organizational change readiness was evaluated using Deszca et al's (2020)' "Rate the Organization's Readiness for Change" tool: this measurement revealed that the DGL school board is ready and responsive to change with a score of 22 based on recent equity initiatives such the Equity Network that has create organizational openness to change. Additionally, the board has recently surveyed staff on its newly deployed anti-racism and equity training, while also having conducted employee satisfaction surveys.

Together, these survey findings reveal that DGL staff broadly support additional equity measures, and particularly those that reduce service gaps and provide integrated mental health supports. However, the data also shows that the staff holds reservations, and doubt senior leaders, principals, and managers' long-term commitment to leading an equity agenda beyond set equity expectations from the Ministry of Education. These perceptions impact both the potential for change and expected durability of the proposed changes.

According to Nadler-Tushman, organizational effectiveness is at its best when the inputs—including the broader environmental culture—and strategy align with the organization's four key components—work, people, informal structures, and formal structures (Deszca et al., 2020; Nadler & Tushman, 1989) in order to produce outputs. The components of Nadler-Tushman's model are detailed below in Figure 3.

Figure 4

Nadler and Tuschman's Congruence Model



Note. Nadler, D. A., & Tushman, Michael. L. (1989). Organizational frame bending:

Principles for managing reorientation. *The Academy of Management Executive*. 3(3), 194-204.

As an open system approach, Nadler and Tushman's (1989) congruence model is a useful assessment framework for this type of PoP because it offers a "comprehensive picture of the organization, its parts, and how they fit together" (Descza et al., 2020, p. 69).

Inputs

As illustrated in Figure 3, the congruence model links environmental inputs to the organizational components and outputs (Descza et al., 2020). Broadly, inputs comprise the organizational environment, its resources, and its history. DGL's specific history provides information about the organization, mission, culture, and strategy, along with insights into the organization's structure and management (Descza et al., 2020). For this reason, the first chapter conducted a PEST analysis to highlight the political, economic, social, and technological factors affecting the school board. This analysis found that, at present, there is a significant amount of pressure on DGL to counter its institutional history of racism and adopt more equity-based initiatives. Specifically, social pressure from advocacy groups such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Parents of Black Children (PoBC) combined with recent political events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the posthumous discovery of thousands of Indigenous children in unmarked mass grave sites at Canadian residential schools, have exposed structural racism in both health and education sectors. In this respect, the change readiness assessment in Chapter 1 shows that the DGL school board is committed to these changes, especially given the presence of internal stakeholders—such as myself—as well as other managers, who are passionate advocates of these changes.

Work

Within the congruence model, the work stage is part of the transformation process and refers to the daily tasks that compromise the larger organizational vision and strategy (Descza et al., 2020). Educators are at the core of this work as professionals who deploy DGL's specific mandates with respect to education and curriculum. However, many other professionals in the organization support these tasks, including teaching assistants, child and youth workers (CYWs), social workers, psychologists, and psychometrists—among others—all of whom are similarly invested in achieving DGL's objectives. To this end, shared

professional knowledge is a vital compliment to educators' teaching skills and competencies in achieving the organization's mission and strategy.

Critically, there is a current shortage of qualified educators in the DGL school board. This shortage results in an intensified employee workload that threatens permanent educators' psychological safety and well-being (The Working Group, 2021). Moreover, this stress disproportionately affects racialized employees because they tend to hold more precarious employment contracts and occupy fewer positions of power and leadership. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be an obvious solution to this employee shortage as a result of which all educators working within the current system are less likely to report job satisfaction and have a diminished sense of self-efficacy due to professional burnout and emotional exhaustion. For this reason, beyond the specific organizational context of DGL, improving employee well-being is an important goal for all Franco-Ontarian educational contexts.

Although this burnout extends beyond racialized employees, the impact of this employee shortage adds another layer to an already strenuous context for educators already coping with race-based stress in the workplace. In these situations, Dezsca et al. (2020) suggest that organizations consider new configurations for staff to perform their tasks, for instance, considering a hybrid work model wherever feasible. Additionally, staff need to be included in discussions that identify potential solutions. In recognition of these variables affecting the DGL work environment, this OIP proposes a shared, bottom-up vision that engages, empowers, mobilizes, and renders employees most responsible for implementing change on the ground level into active participants in creating and shaping the larger change-vision itself.

Formal Organization

Broadly speaking, organizations set up formal structures to coordinate and manage the tasks required to meet their strategic objectives. Put differently, formal systems and processes must align to address weaknesses and support strategic planning. In this OIP, formal organizations include services and structures that provide mental health support and

services as delivered by employees working in human resource management and the mental health equity leadership team. Although these teams occasionally collaborate on promotional activities that support staff well-being, the organizational culture at DGL tends to be fragmented and siloed in practice. Thus, the staff tends to carry out their tasks and roles within a hierarchical and transactional culture that promotes a culture of efficiency and accuracy. While the organization purportedly recognizes the importance of mental health as an overarching concept, the underlying organizational assumptions nevertheless hinder and undermine collaborative and participative processes and lateral communication. This organizational culture is consistent with Schein's (2017) finding that, in some organizational contexts, "any challenge or questioning of basic assumptions will release anxiety and defensiveness" (p.29).

In sum, achieving the OIP's EDI goals requires a change-team that can leverage the strength of DGL's present structures and staff to bring about radical change. To this end, applying a CRT lens during the awakening phase of CPM, highlights the extent to which formal systems produce institutionalized oppression, discriminatory practices, and oppressive working conditions, all of which negatively impact racialized staff's mental health. Consequently, the previous TSUL approach will support agents of change and senior management in making the policy, procedural, and organizational changes necessary to advance the proposed change vision.

Informal Structure

Organizational culture is an intangible and powerful phenomenon embedded within a larger ethos that influences how practices, policies, norms, relationships, and tasks are carried out (Deszca et al., 2020; Schein, 2017). In this regard, organizational cultures and sub-cultures represent the accumulated learning present at the levels of systems, units, and individuals (Schein 2017). Crucially, most analyses fail to capture the wide breadth and subtle nature of racial discrimination and microaggression rooted within these cultures. Instead, racism is often recognized only when the actions are overt enough to be addressed

through policy modifications. Thus, senior leadership rarely considers the extent to which these exclusionary practices are embedded within the organizational systems.

CMP and CAP models contribute to organizational culture shifts by engaging stakeholders in reflective practices that raise their consciousness of these issues and promote broader critical inquiry towards racial discrimination. This shift in the lens is useful in examining the invisibility and universality of white supremacy that Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) describe as “the pervasiveness, magnitude, and normalcy of white privilege, dominance, and assumed superiority,” (p.143) and its reverberating effects on racialized educators. Consequently, Descza et al. (2020) argue that it is crucial for change team change a culture inquiry (Poekert et al., 2020) to expose and redress the dysfunctional norms and deeply rooted structures and practices that reproduce inequal outcomes for racialized groups (Poekert et al., 2020). Finally, TSUL can help change-agents generate a new organizational culture that can sustain these changes by creating new standards and shared values that foster belonging, safety, and racial equity.

People

In all organizations, staff' versatility and diverse skillsets contribute its culture and working environment. In the educational context, such as DGL school board, each worker's skills, attitudes, and knowledge are assigned various roles, duties, and responsibilities to meet the organization's needs and mandates (Descza et al., 2020). The staff perform their tasks within the confines of both formal and informal structures. Thus, understanding the impact of the proposed changes on the current DGL workforce is essential in managing the change process. This understanding can help the change team mitigate resistance to the change vision while ensuring organizational readiness. Notably, the success of any change depends on key stakeholders acting in formal and informal leadership positions. In the DGL school board, some formal stakeholders provide mental health and wellness support, which include mental health promotion, counselling, workshops, and school crisis intervention. Conversely, informal leaders may offer peer support, which is an equally valuable contribution in promoting the overall well-being of the staff.

This OIP advocates for systemic changes in the DGL school board that challenges and disrupts both, organizational structures, and also individuals' personal values and beliefs about equity, privilege, and power. As previously discussed, challenging these value systems and implicit beliefs may produce feelings of anxiety, anger, and shame (DiAngelo, 2016). The change team is also required to assess the extent to which stakeholders are likely to cooperate or to resist the potential changes. This potential for resistance is precisely why the frameworks and leadership models throughout this OIP so heavily promote a collaborative approach. To this end, through-collaborative dialogue focused on understanding and knowledge transfer, opportunities of resistance can be reframed as potential sites for meaningful buy-ins and participation (Deszca et al., 2020). Thus, a tempered leadership perspective supports these processes precisely because it helps unpack stakeholders' beliefs and assumptions, organizational practices (Cadwell et al., 2011), as well as ways of knowing. Since the nature of this OIP involves dismantling internal systems and structures that perpetuate systemic racism, a clear understanding of stakeholders' interests and values is important in order to manage the implementation plan ethically and responsibly (Deszca et al., 2020).

Outputs

Creating an aligned fit between work, people, the formal organization of DGL, and its informal structures is the best way for the senior leadership team to achieve the EDI goals of the larger PoP. This alignment is particularly important with respect to the transformation process because the change vision itself serves as a catalyst for organizational learning, development, and growth. Thus, the change team must consider how internal and external conditions will impact expected outputs. For any leader, a key challenge is continuously realigning system components in response to changing external and internal conditions (Deszca et al., 2020).

In this regard, Nadler and Tushman's (1989) congruence model has three advantages for the senior leadership team at DGL. First, it provides a framework to help structure an organizational analysis; second, it offers a practical classification of various internal

organizational components and their intersections and interactions. Finally, it also contributes to a gap analysis. In the context of the DGL school board, this gap analysis indicates three priorities for the senior leadership team: a) lateral communication and collaboration among key stakeholders; b) a learning culture that sustains equity; and c) an organizational culture based on accountability. Below, a more thorough description of the gap analysis provides four possible solutions to guide the PoP.

Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

This section presents four potential solutions: 1) maintaining the status quo; 2) establishing a virtual workplace racial affinity group; 3) developing an online self-reporting tool to report racist acts; and 4) creating a cross-sector group to inform mental health policies and practices. A discussion follows to evaluate each solution and matches them with the scope of the PoP and the PDSA (plan-do-study-act) inquiry process.

The leadership-focused vision of this OIP fosters change that centres around the need for school leaders to become allies, develop their anti-racist identity (De Turk, 2011; Erskine & Bilimoria, 2019). School leaders are to use their influence and power to challenge the status quo and dismantle systems of oppression and discrimination. Therefore, the chosen solution must incorporate a professional learning component of school leaders to ensure they build their capacity to go beyond technical changes (Shields et al., 2018). This will require leaders to develop a new way of thinking and being in order to take on the mandate of bringing about transformative and equitable changes (Shields et al., 2018; Spikes, 2018).

Solution 1: Maintaining the Status Quo

The first possible solution for the PoP involves no changes at all; instead, current policies and procedures such as the Well-Being and Attendance Policy and the current Employee Assistance Program (EAP) continue in essence. Although this option does not resolve any racial inequities, it is nevertheless sufficient for the DGL school board to meet its legal and moral obligations. This solution has minimal cost and does not involve any structural changes that would require school leaders to challenge their practices.

Consequently, this option does not require any additional financial, human, or technological resources.

From a critical race theory (CRT) perspective, this solution maintains the existing working conditions at DGL. Thus, this option maintains policies rooted in neutrality; unfortunately, as previously discussed, the central problem with this viewpoint is that they perpetuate a Western-centric view of racial discrimination that fails to recognize the extent to which colourblindness—as a systemic policy—can reinforce oppressive structures. Since the Well-Being and Attendance policy, in particular, emphasizes managing absenteeism, its central aim is to investigate absences. This neither encourages, nor requires, senior leadership to meaningfully inquire about staff needs or employee-wellbeing.

Solution 2: Establishing a Virtual Workplace Racial Affinity Group

This solution proposes a staff-created space focused on providing racialized staff with a sense of community. Otherwise known as an affinity group, this working group would become part of DGL's formal structure. In this way, the group can enhance the school board's response to the realities and effects of systemic racism, particularly with respect to supporting racialized staff (Great Schools Partnership, n.d.). It is my hypothesis that affinity groups offer liberating sites of solidarity and collegiality to racialized staff. Notably, affinity groups require shared responsibility and commitment from both: the organization and its workers. Therefore, before deploying the group, school leaders need to participate in professional development such as anti-racism and/or anti-bias training. This training is crucial to help senior and school leaders better understand initial barriers to the change vision and enhance their skills to engage in race-based discussions productively (Crary, 2017). Otherwise, a lack of understanding racial literacy knowledge and skills may lead school leaders to feel disengage and uninterested in the change initiative (Great School Partnership, n.d.) Although this affinity group would be staff-led, school leaders and managers benefit because it is a direct conduit to employees' perspectives and needs. As members share specific examples of systemic discrimination and bias within DGL culture, school leaders can leverage this information to improve workplace culture and operationalize

necessary changes to transform current practices and policies (Great Schools Partnerships, n.d.; Hirsch, 2021)

In addition to providing senior and school leadership with better knowledge about structural bias at DGL, this affinity group is also rooted in an EDI approach that supports all staff. This proposed solution presents a structural challenge to current race-neutral practices (Hirsh, 2021; Watson & Rivera-McCutchen, 2016). As a result, non-racialized employees may perceive racial affinity groups as promoting racial segregation (Hirsch, 2021; Mosley, 2018). Given this potential polarization, it is important to acknowledge that racialized staff may be reluctant to participate for fear of retaliation. In sum, this solution demands that everyone—including both racialized and non-racialized staff—practice open communication about their perceptions and potential learned biases. Implementing this solution require an operational budget, release time and a stipend for the facilitator.

Solution 3: Develop and Implement an Online Self-Reporting Racism Tool

That racism that racialized folks in the workplace experience is well-documented (McGee & Stovall, 2015, Mosely, 2018); however, little is known about the support that racialized staff need to navigate and respond to such experiences (Mosely, 2018). Although DGL has an Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy, the mechanism for reporting such events is laborious and difficult to navigate. To ease the reporting process, Solution 3 proposes the development and implementation of an online self-reporting tool to track and investigate racist incidents that involve or directly/ implicitly impact staff. Staff members could use the tool anonymously, which increases the likelihood of reporting. Importantly, reports would be immediately sent to a designated taskforce for follow up. As part of a comprehensive and systemic approach focused on increasing the organization's capacity to identify and respond to racism, this tool can serve as a resource to support racialized staff and ensure that their voices and experiences are heard and validated through the investigation process.

Importantly, this solution requires that DGL leaders take corrective action to address race-based stress and advance the school board's EDI objectives. Moreover, it also prioritizes

racialized staff's psychological safety, so that folks of colour feel more supported in interpersonal relationships that encourage them to show themselves without negative consequences (Newman et al., 2017). However, to add weight and support to this tool, school leaders and managers must also develop their own racial consciousness and ensure that all investigations into racist acts go beyond acknowledging inequities to proactively address oppression in all dimensions—socially, politically, and educationally (Diem et al., 2019).

Developing and implementing this tool, then, will require human resources to form a taskforce to process reports, monitor the tools, and investigate occurrences of racism. Thus, continuous EDI and human rights training will be necessary to ensure that the taskforce has the necessary expertise and knowledge about culturally appropriate mental health support. Further, this task force must also consider that any self-reporting tool can potentially contribute to racial trauma if it is not integrated into a comprehensive approach focused on universal equity. Thus, asking staff members to divulge experiences of racism must be done sensitively and staff must also have faith that the organization will respond appropriately.

Solution 4: Cross-Sector of Racialized Group to Inform Mental Health Policies and Practices

The final solution promotes the establishment of a working group stewarded by human resource management and the mental health and equity leadership team to work collaboratively with a group of diverse and racialized staff from different sectors across the organization. To succeed, this working group must have a mandate to improve and develop policies and procedures with working conditions that support employee mental health and well-being. Currently, DGL leaders have an inadequate understanding of their employees' mental health, specifically with respect to how racialized staff are weathering the mental, emotional, and psychological effects of racism as a result of working under white dominance and privilege (McGee & Stovall, 2015). Since school leaders and managers serve a racially diverse population, supporting this solution requires school leaders to complete anti-racism training and critically examine their own social identity and positionality (Poekert et al.,

2020). These self-reflections are critical to ensure that principals and managers are cognizant of their own role in upholding whiteness (Crary, 2017; Khalifa et al., 2016).

Notably, this solution provides racialized staff with a platform to voice concerns, contribute to decision-making, and create new transformative frameworks (Watson & Rivera-McCutchen, 2016). Additionally, the organization itself benefits from this heightened awareness about racial inequity which it can use to implement meaningful changes (Armstrong & McMahon, 2013). However, this solution also requires financial resources in the form of an operational budget; participating staff will also require a release time and flexible scheduling to support attendance at after-hours meetings. If the group sought to complete a comparative analysis with other school boards, the working group would then also need other school boards to support the larger initiative and provide their own internal and external documents. To this end, the strength of this solution also forms a potential barrier; by challenging the status quo and hierarchical decision-making structures, racialized staff will gain tools to disrupt inequities, challenge dominant views, and existing power structures (Tilghman-Havens, 2020). Yet, a profound disruption to the current organizational culture is inherent to these types of changes, which many stakeholders, internal and external to the DGL schoolboard, may resist.

Comparison of the Solutions

Table 1, below, summarizes the proposed solutions and considers their feasibility and alignment with the larger change vision. Crucially, all of the proposed solutions require school leaders and managers to participate in the respective implementation with the exception of solution 1, which does not offer any change and therefore does not require any special consideration. However, ongoing commitment and involvement of the senior leadership team are essential to solutions 2, 3, and 4. More specifically, these solutions require school leaders to reframe their beliefs and worldviews. Thus, these solutions include the risk that senior leadership display defensive behaviours as they engage in this critical inquiry. Shields (2018) describes these feelings as part of a fragility in which white people experience an intense emotional reaction when the white-dominant status quo is challenged.

Since these emotional reactions tend to reinstate white racial superiority by avoiding or withdrawing from cross-racial discussions (Shields, 2018), it is important that the DGL senior leadership publicly commits to the chosen solution.

Additionally, there are potential operational constraints that impact the successful implementation of solutions 2, 3, and 4. Specifically, staff will require release time to join the taskforces, as well as organize and facilitate the group sessions. Notably, solution 4 is positioned as a strategy that can influence structural change while strengthening organizational accountability. Thus, the cross-sector working group requires the most organizational support. Although solutions 2 and 3 target interpersonal racism by promoting organizational change, solution 4 differs in its dynamic, decentralized, communal, and transformative approach to organizational change. Put differently, it promotes a “collaborative process whereby formal leaders engage followers in a mutual influence for the collective good” (Aliye, 2020, p. 729). It is both the hardest to implement as well as the most likely to produce meaningful change with respect to EDI initiatives within the DGL school board and the scope of the PoP.

Table 1

Short-, Medium- & Long-Term Goals

Factors and Considerations	Solution 1	Solution 2	Solution 3	Solution 4
proposed change	Maintaining Status Quo	Establishing a workplace racial affinity group	Develop and implement an online racism self-reporting tool	Cross-sector of racialized group
Resources				
Time	Not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting to happen during school calendar every eight weeks • Flexible schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September to June- Time to develop, review and pilot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September-June
Human	No additional human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity and human rights officer • Group facilitator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity and human and rights officer • Human resources management • Taskforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources management leads the collaboration • Taskforce
Fiscal	No additional budget is needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release for staff • Stipend for facilitators • Operational budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release time for staff • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release time for staff
Information	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment of senior leaders • Anti-bias and antiracist training to school leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment of senior leaders • Data analysis for trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment of senior leaders

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical analysis of structures and mental health • Gap analysis during awakening phase
Technology	Not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal group web portal to share resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool accessible through the DGL webpage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal web portal
Highlights	Staff will potentially be provided with more communication to increase awareness of the program and service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional support to racialized staff • Centre the voice and experiences of historically marginalized groups • Addressing challenges and resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing interpersonal and structural racism • Data to inform change in practices and norms • Procedural justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop shared vision and language • Challenges and shifts in institutional and structural • Deep organizational commitment to equity • Centre the voices and experiences of historically marginalized groups

Chosen Solution

Ultimately, this OIP selects a combination of solutions 3 and 4 to address the PoP. As described in Chapter 1, a brief organizational analysis found a positive readiness for change. Given my own employment within the board, my role as a change agent will help school leaders and managers develop anti-racist identities that are inclusive of cultural humility, critical consciousness of self, and responsive cultural competencies (Diem et al., 2019; Galloway et al., 2019). Continuous anti-bias and anti-racism training will support the development of these skills, knowledge, and competencies. Moreover, this training will also help principals and managers develop new cultural norms and better navigate cross-cultural situations (Trenerry and Paradies, 2012). All of these will positively benefit the organizational culture at DGL by reducing systemic discrimination and promoting equitable structures, policies, and working conditions.

Thus, the combination of an online self-reporting tool with a cross-sector working group focused on the intersection and pervasiveness of race and racism (Cabrera, 2018) will positively benefit racialized staff in the DGL school board through continuous, engaged improvements to daily working conditions. From a CRT and servant leadership perspective, these solutions are also likely to improve racialized staff's psychological safety and emotional well-being (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). Together, both solutions will bolster racialized staff

resiliency and build DGL's organizational capacity to identify, address, and prioritize racialized staff' mental health and well-being while creating more equitable outcomes for the broader school community (Northouse, 2019).

Additionally, the Afrocentric perspective of the Ubuntu community model can support the change team—including school leaders—to implement the chosen solution by considering contextual differences, including language, and meaning making (Aliye, 2016). The Ubuntu philosophy, thus, can assist school leaders and managers in furthering their understanding of how racialized staff use their respective cultures as protective factors to mitigate negative mental health impacts (McGee & Stovall, 2015). Similarly, servant leadership's emphasis on listening, healing, stewardship, and commitment to others' growth (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002; Spears, 2010) will help engage participants through implementation. Combined, TSUL can help school leaders and managers act as role models in creating a safe and trusting environment that fosters belonging and inclusion.

Finally, Demings' (1986) PDSA (plan, do, study and act) cycle, further discussed in Chapter 3, provides change leaders with a four-step model to divide these solutions into smaller measurable goals prior to system-wide implementation. Importantly, the 'do' phase of PDSA will allow change leaders to monitor, adjust, improve, and align the application of solutions 3 and 4 to meet its broader objectives (Cleary, 1995; Deszca et al., 2020). To this end, the PDSA cycle will give stakeholders a sense of ownership over the change process and implementation. Crucially, weaving PDSA with the CPM/CAP change model will challenge stakeholders' beliefs and practices throughout the implementation process; however, these challenges are essential in ensuring that bottom-up collaboration and open dialogue occur within all stages of the implementation.

Given these preferred solutions, change leaders must also consider emerging ethical concerns prior to developing the implementation plan itself. Thus, the following section discusses how the organization can address the ethical challenges arising from this OIP.

Leadership Ethics in Organizational Change

A grounded sense of ethics is crucial to any leader's ability to influence and engage followers toward a common goal (Sharif & Scandura, 2014). Indeed, the mere idea of sharing a common goal with others has a moral dimension, as both leader and follower must agree on next steps (Northouse, 2019). This section first discusses ethical leadership and its impact on school leaders. It then considers ethical challenges that senior leadership must consider throughout the change process, particularly with respect to the school board's responsibilities and moral obligations to the shared school community.

Notably, school leaders have many responsibilities. As they are obligated not only to their staff and employees, but also to the students, their families, and the wider community in which the school is located. Thus, an ethical dimension to their leadership style is crucial to ensure that upper management upholds their moral responsibilities to all of these stakeholders. Broadly, ethical leadership principles can promote leaders' moral sensitivity and awareness of their impact on others (Tuana, 2014). In other words, ethical sensitivity helps leaders view ethical dilemmas with empathy. In turn, this heightened sensitivity allows leadership teams to address and reflect on the consequences of action—or inaction—and the moral weight of those decisions (Martinez, 2014; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). In the context of DGL, an ethical leadership approach contributes to a supportive work environment that mitigates policies and workplace realities that negatively harm employee mental health (Davenport et al., 2016).

Broadly, Northouse (2019) proposes five ethical leadership principles that would equip DGL leaders with the necessary foundation to lead a change vision that challenges organizational structures: respect, service, justice, honesty, and community. Importantly, these ethical principles are already pillars within the TSUL's emphasis on moral standards, service, and community. Indeed, Ciulla (2005) argues that “a leader's intent and the means that he or she uses to get things done are morally important for earning the trust and cooperation of followers” (p, 332). Thus, each of these moral principles increase the likelihood for stakeholder buy-in; moreover, they foster a work culture focused on an open dialogue that promotes and acknowledges ethical behaviours (Mihelic et al., 2010).

Ethics of Respect

The Ethics of respect is a cornerstone practice in any leadership framework. Specifically, it asks that leaders respect each and every stakeholder and participant. In the context of the DGL school board, the ethics of respect encourages all staff to be authentic and honest. Since this OIP seeks to implement both an online self-reporting tool and a cross-sector working group, the ethics of respect will also contribute to meaning making as school leaders and managers embrace new practices and norms within the organizational cultures. Broadly, this ethic requires school leaders and managers to demonstrate appreciation towards staff with acts that honour their worth and differences (Northouse, 2019). It also aligns well with TSUL in similarly viewing respect as both impactful and transformative. With respect to supporting racial equity as it relates to staff well-being, a key component of respect is active listening. Thus, school leadership needs to practice empathy and welcome multiple viewpoints and perspectives before considering their own positionality and lived experiences (Northouse, 2019). In the context of this OIP, an ethic of respect implies that school leaders and managers will nurture employee growth, development, and self-reflection in order to increase perceptions of efficacy and competency, both of which are directly linked to overall well-being in the workplace (Northouse, 2019).

The Ethics of Service

As an organization in the education sector, it is imperative that DGL acts as a steward enabling the change vision in order to realize that the proposed solutions have the desired impact on racialized employees (Senge, 1990). This ethic recognizes that the change vision extends beyond the borders of the organization and encompasses the well-being of the broader community. Thus, this notion of service is essential for school leaders to act on their ethical responsibilities of goodwill and altruism (Ciulla, 2005). While altruism can be an impetus for action, Ciulla (2005) points out that altruism is neither a normative principle, nor a guarantee that leaders' behaviours will be either ethical or moral. However, I firmly believe that prioritizing staff's well-being and needs is a first step in designing future policies and procedures that emphasize others' well-being. To this end, Northouse (2019) argues that

cares for others is a key component of moral leadership because it encourages school leaders to foster relationships of interdependence that validate and acknowledge others, all of which support an organizational culture of support.

The Ethics of Justice

The ethics of justice is salient to the implementation of both racism reporting tools and a cross-sector working group that involves cross-racial dialogue and debate. Indeed, employees' perception of fairness and procedural justice is crucial for both their initial and on-going participation in the change process. By emphasizing justice and equity throughout the implementation plan, change leaders can ensure that all school stakeholders, students, educators, parents, administrators, and others are treated with dignity and fair play (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). The ethic of justice is "concerned with how the issue of fairness is necessary for all people who are cooperating together to promote their common interest" (Northouse, 2019, p.349).

The Ethics of Honesty

In the context of this OIP, school leaders must engage in a critical inquiry process that interrogates practices related to racial equity and inclusion. Thus, the solutions in this OIP demand school leaders to act with moral courage, become comfortable in discomfort (Shields et al., 2018), and act as allies who openly challenge and question policies relating to concepts of power, privilege, language, and oppression (Martinez, 2014). This ethic fosters school leaders' capacity to advocate for racial equity and build a culture of accountability. For the change team, an ethic of honesty also emphasizes timely disclosure of information and findings (Mihelic et al., 2010; Northouse, 2019). It also requires DGL leaders to act with integrity, transparency, and honesty about their intentions and possible actions. Notably, this may lead to interpersonal conflicts with other managers in addressing emotionally charged situations disclosed through the reporting tool; however, preparing for these conflicts and addressing them head-on further supports the larger change vision described in the PoP. In conclusion, the ethic of honesty supports open dialogue and engages

stakeholders in the necessary analysis required to find appropriate solutions (Mihelic et al., 2010).

The Ethics of Community

Ultimately, the PoP addresses problems that extend beyond the boundaries of the organization. Thus, working towards social justice requires DGL school leaders to engage other adjacent communities in pursuit of broader EDI initiatives (Northouse, 2019; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Indeed, attending to the greater good and well-being of the community is an expected outcome of TSUL. Within the ethic of community, both the organization and stakeholders must work collaboratively to cultivate a sense of belonging and purpose within the community (Northouse, 2019; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Although this integration encourages potentially transformative decisions within the institutional context, the potential impact of any of these potential changes is nevertheless contingent on senior leadership' ethical positioning. This further reinforces the interconnectedness of community within all aspects of the implementation plan and change vision.

In summary, ensuring that the change team approaches the implementation with moral standards and high levels of accountability will inspire confidence in the DGL leadership team's ability to address systemic racism and improve employee well-being within the organization. Additionally, an ethical framework will encourage the change team to “do right” by the change vision in addressing racism and employee well-being. This conversation is especially salient regarding the Franco-Ontarian community, a linguistic minority that has historically succeeding in mobilizing community efforts to achieve common goals. Thus, not only does TSUL support these ethical leadership behaviours, but it is also consistent with the collaborative and participatory nature of the OIP itself.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 has outlined integrated leadership approaches (transformative, servant, and Ubuntu) and describes their combined effectiveness in achieving transformative organizational change. Additionally, it has summarized the Change Path Model (CPM) (Deszca et al., 2020) and the Critical Appreciative Process (CAP) (Grant & Humphries,

2006; Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015) and elucidated how the two models can enhance participation and amplify stakeholders' voices while engaging them in reflexive critical inquiry. In this regard, Nadler and Tushman's (1989) congruence model reveals a significant misalignment between the DGL's work component, formal organization, and informal structures; specifically, the DGL school board needs to increase lateral communication and collaboration among key stakeholders. This model also emphasizes the importance of generating new learning and decentering existing leadership models in pursuit of equity. This chapter has identified and compared possible solutions to the PoP, including barriers to their implementation. Ultimately, the implementation plan combines two of the proposed solutions: an online self-reporting tool to disclose racist incidents and a cross-sector working group that will interrogate existing policies and structures at DGL and issue new policy and procedural recommendations. The chapter concludes by considering the organization's ethical and moral responsibilities as it pertains to this PoP, drawing from Northouse's (2019) ethical leadership principles. These principles anchor the OIP's ethical orientation in the implementation framework and stated objectives of the OIP, which are further discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation and Communication

Chapter 3 introduces the implementation plan that will support the PoP as previously articulated in this OIP, which is the need to better support DGL staff's mental health and well-being by achieving specific equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) objectives. For this OIP to achieve its transformative goals, the implementation plan must promote and facilitate bottom-up participation (Deszca et al., 2020). Consequently, this chapter presents an evaluation and monitoring framework to measure and track these proposed changes. It also introduces a communication plan to convey the need for change to stakeholders, which includes staff, school principals, managers, and senior leaders. The chapter concludes by exploring next steps and future inquiries.

To begin, this first section describes an implementation plan that advances racial equity through collaborative improvement to the board's well-being policies and practices. Broadly, the implementation framework aims to better position school leaders as allies by building their capacity, knowledge, and expertise in both anti-racism and anti-bias practices throughout all levels of the organization.

Change Implementation Plan

The vision for change in this OIP emphasizes the importance of leadership, particularly with respect to senior management; as allies, school principals and administrators are tremendous change agents because they hold the institutional power required to instigate and sustain change in the organizational culture (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Deszca et al., 2020). The overarching goal of this plan addresses the need to better support DGL employees' mental health and well-being; thus, it is of paramount importance that this support is responsive to and includes the voices and experiences of racialized staff. In building upon chapter 2's description of a two-pronged solution involving the creation of an online racism reporting tool and a cross-sector working group, this chapter further describes how these tools can effect change through two specific task forces: one group will oversee the deployment of the online reporting tool, along with a mandate to review current

policies; the second group will revise and develop new policies that better address current racial discrimination and race-based stress in the organizational culture.

Support and Resources

To build and strengthen school leaders' allyship, it is critical to enhance their respective cultural competency and racial consciousness through professional learning (Spikes, 2018). In this regard, Howard (2010) indicates that professional development sessions on racial literacies should include the following five phases: building trust, engaging personal culture, confronting social justice and domination, and transforming practices. Combined, these phases provide the foundation for the critical self-inquiry required for allies to dismantle institutional racism. To this end, Rogers and Mosley (2008) argue that these development sessions must teach white leaders how to analyze white supremacy and whiteness as racially constructed identities (Rolon-Dow et al., 2021).

Equally important is the need to expand school leaders' awareness about how their own social identities impact their educational experiences and understanding of racism in their schools (Rolon-Dow, 2021). As principals and managers learn these skills, they can use language and critical frameworks to view demographics and incidents through racialized viewpoints. Mainly, racial literacy prompts principals and managers to reflect on their personal history of racial socialization. (Stevenson, 2014; Rolon-Dow, 2021). Moreover, in their dual capacity as trained allies and administrators, school leaders can then understand and manage strong emotional reactions—such as anger, guilt, and denial—that stem from stressful racial experiences (DiAngelo, 2017). Additionally, as trained allies, senior leadership can then inquire and investigate their findings and observations (Rolon-Dow, 2021). Put differently, this ally-focused training ensures that those with the most institutional power can attend to the underlying racial dynamics, conflicts, or inequities that generate these incidents and emotions (Rolon-Dow et al., 2021).

Change Path Model and Critical Appreciative Process

Addressing systemic racism is a collective endeavour that requires participation and engagement from all levels of leadership. Consequently, this OIP conceptualizes its change

vision using Deszca et al.'s (2020) Change Path Model (CPM) and Ridley-Duff, & Duncan's (2015) Critical Appreciative Process (CAP) four-phase model, which are further discussed in the forthcoming section.

Awakening-Discovery

As previously described in chapter 2, the awakening phase focuses on raising awareness, defining the problem, building readiness, and validating the need for change among key stakeholders (Deszca et al., 2020). In this OIP, the awakening-discovery phase will occur during May and June. This period provides enough time to build urgency, secure senior leaders' approval for change, develop and pass an operational budget, and ensure that the DGL administrators are sufficiently—and publicly—committed to change efforts that subvert the status quo (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2012). In this phase, senior leadership—which includes the human resources director and the superintendent leadership team—must establish and disseminate a compelling vision that aligns the proposed outcomes of this OIP with the school board's wider strategic planning mandates with respect to EDI (Deszca et al., 2020). Ultimately, a successful change vision requires senior leadership to be responsible for "confronting more than just what is and working toward creating an alternative political and social imagination" (Weiner, 2003, p. 9).

Thus, as a first step, I will draw on both internal and external data to raise senior leadership's awareness of systemic racism, bias, and discrimination within the school board (James & Turner, 2017). External data will include recent reports such as Review Peel District School Board (Chadha et al., 2020) and the Toronto District School Board's Combatting Hate and Racism Board Report (TDSB, 2022), each of which describes the deep entrenchment of racism within Ontario's education system. Internally, I will examine DGL's annual employee well-being survey, data collected from newly deployed anti-bias and anti-bias employee training (DGL, 2021), and a PEST analysis that describes current gaps and the need for change. Importantly, the aim of presenting this information and data is to help foster a shared understanding and common language within the senior leadership team so that findings can be disseminated system-wide in order to raise urgency and build readiness

for change (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2012; Deszca et al., 2020). Ideally, these findings will stimulate internal conversations about the various types of racist and discriminatory experiences that racialized educators routinely experience as a matter of course in their employment, both within the education sector, broadly, and DGL, specifically (Chae et al., 2021).

By acknowledging the significant and traumatic impact of discrimination on staff of colour, senior leaders can contribute to building a culture of trust and solidarity—a requisite first step in tackling complex issues involving racism and prejudice (Spikes, 2018). In so doing, senior leadership must foster a collaborative space in which all employees—at all levels of the organization—can be vulnerable, engage in courageous conversation, and participate in a shared sense of community. To this end, Singleton (2015) guidelines on conducting conversations about race—which invite participants to stay engaged, experience discomfort, speak their truth, and both expect and accept non-closure—should guide every stage of the change process.

Ultimately, this initial awakening-discovery phase will emphasize the importance of conversations in understanding staff needs and subsequently supporting employee well-being and growth (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). In particular, this process will engage racialized staff as valued contributors through focus groups and online surveys that seek to amplify their voices and inform DGL leaders about psychological injuries (anxiety, depression) resulting from institutional racism. Human resources will work with the mental health and equity leadership team to lead the focus groups, develop the online survey, and then analyze baseline data. The change implementation team will then use this information to set initial change goals. Crucially, these conversations seek to prioritize storytelling as and interrogations that uncover racial discrimination (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2012). Moreover, incorporating racialized staff viewpoints offers a counter-narrative to the prevailing organizational culture and status quo which will bolster bottom-up participation and increase buy-in to the proposed change vision (Descza et al., 2020). Nevertheless, as stated from the outset, any success in this phase—or, indeed, any success in the larger change vision

itself—relies on school leaders to fully engage in the professional learning required to effectively navigate the psychological, interpersonal, and structural components of race and racism in educational contexts (Rolon-Dow et al., 2021).

Mobilization-Dream

Following the awakening-discovery phase, the mobilization-dream stage will occur during the beginning of the academic year; specifically, from September to February. Building on the first phase, this second phase similarly emphasizes a participatory planning framework in which school leaders, managers, and staff collaborate in driving change (Leino & Puumala, 2021). Crucially, this framework emphasizes interdependence, commitment, and collective empowerment (Leino & Puumala, 2021). Thus, once senior managers have agreed and committed to the change vision, the human resources manager will invite key players to form a coalition to lead the change process such as the mental leader, the equity and human rights officer, myself, as well as human resources agents.

As part of this change team, I will liaise with the local representatives of the Association of French Principals (ADFO) and DGL senior leaders to launch monthly half a professional learning session on racial literacy for the first year. I will create and share a training calendar to schedule meeting times to facilitate school leaders' participation by scheduling meetings at convenient times; these sessions will also serve as regular updates on the progress of the implementation plan. Notably, I will ensure that these learning opportunities are flexible and multi-modal to accommodate senior management's specific needs and work realities.

The equity and human rights officer and the mental leader will facilitate these sessions in person as well as virtually using the school board's Microsoft TEAMS content management system. Asynchronous materials will support these sessions, such as a web-based discussion board with resources and readings on concepts such as power, privilege, implicit bias, and macro- and micro-aggressions; these are intended to support the critical reflection necessary to reform practices and policies (Spikes, 2018). The implementation

team will then track metrics including attendance, feedback surveys, data utilization, and download rates to gauge general participation and efficacy.

Additionally, the change team will provide an application process for DGL staff at all organizational levels to participate in one of two task forces. The first task force will have a mandate to design, pilot, and implement a self-reporting racism tool that will enable the school board to process self-reported cases of racial incidents; the group will also monitor reporting trends over time. Additionally, delegates of the implementation change team will act as secretaries on the task force to liaise with the larger change team in supporting the committee's initiatives and findings. At the end of the first three months, the task force will produce a summary report to gauge use and general efficacy. The second task force will review internal and external policies relevant to staff well-being and mental health and recommend modifications or additions to current DGL procedures and policies. Although the first task force will chiefly oversee the implementation of the online reporting tool, both task forces will work together to design the tool before it is launched.

This collaborative process is important to ensure that the design process includes knowledge promotion about trends impacting structural racism, racial battle fatigue, and microaggressions (Leino & Puumala, 2021). Crucially, knowledge production—within each task force, respectively, and also through joint collaborative efforts—will inform future policy revisions. Notably, given that both task forces will jointly oversee the co-creation of the tool, all task force members need to examine some initial design questions from a critical race theory perspective. These questions include, but are not limited, to the following considerations: What structural practices or dimension makes you hyper-visible or invisible? What practices or dimensions impact your well-being? Do you feel safe to report or challenge microaggressions? How does white supremacy affect your daily work?

To support the work of these task forces, a central email inbox will ensure continuous, two-way communication with all members. This will support collegial relationships by ensuring that all members receive the same information, feedback, and other communications. Additionally, transparent dissemination of feedback from the focus

groups, surveys, and questionnaires distributed in the awakening-discovery phase will also inform the cross-sector task force work. This work will culminate in launching an online pilot of the reporting tool which will support a first draft policy review; combined, these initiatives will be important milestones to share and celebrate with stakeholders. To this end, the implementation team will send regular updates on the change vision and its progress through various channels—including HR bulletins, staff meetings, the internal online portal, email announcements, and so forth—to keep staff interested and committed to the changes.

The implementation of these solutions are first steps in addressing the gaps that emerged from Nadler and Tushman's (1989) Congruence Model as conducted in chapter 1. Of note is the central emphasis in this implementation plan on lateral communication and collaboration between stakeholders. As the task forces generate new learning, they are also developing collaborative processes that sustain the equity improvements they seek to recommend and enhance.

Moreover, school leaders' will engage in professional development that build their capacity to implement an organizational culture based in accountability. Thus, these proposed solutions respond directly to the initial questions that emerged from the PoP. Chapter 1, for instance, described the need for transformative leadership as a crucial first step in dismantling racism and race-based stress. To this end, the racial literacy training described above details a path for senior management to become allies in their leadership skills, practices, and behaviours. Although chapter 2 described the potential merits of maintaining the status quo—or inaction—it also showed how this choice reinforces white supremacy, institutional oppression, and systems of racial oppression. As a strategy that only strengthens white power and systems of oppression, the OIP clearly describes why transformative change must occur. Thus, the deployment of a self-reporting tool is an important mechanism that fosters procedural justice; by its very nature—in calling attention to acts of racism—it demands an organizational culture focused on accountability in order to recognize and legitimize act on racial violence and then create procedures that promote a more inclusive work climate.

Acceleration-Design

Starting in March and ending in June, the acceleration-design phase maintains change momentum and ensures continuous communication. In this phase, the change team will present the final draft of revised policies to the human resources director, the superintendent leadership team, and other school leaders. The change team, the task forces, and school leaders can then further reflect on how to ensure that the organization is not constructing or sustaining racist and inequitable systems. Further soliciting school leaders' feedback can entice additional buy-in to the change vision and support a more complete understanding of employee well-being and further changes, if necessary. This phase will also conclude with a summary report at the end of the self-reporting tool's trial period, upon which senior leadership can build further changes.

Institutionalization-Destiny

The institutionalization-destiny stage concludes the first change cycle, which occurs over a duration slightly longer than one full school year. Prior to a system-wide launch, the Board of Trustees will receive the task forces' reports and conclusions, including an interim evaluation of the self-reporting tool. After presenting these findings, the change implementation team will continue their data collection and evaluation to determine if these solutions are achieving the appropriate goals and outcomes, which include increasing racialized staff's job satisfaction, their perception of procedural justice, and a more satisfactory workplace climate rooted in collaboration and inclusivity. Specifically, the change team will answer the following two questions in their on-going review. First, is the DGL culture more inclusive, accountable, and just? Second, are leadership practices and behaviours more supportive and equitable? Importantly, continuous monitoring will enable the change team to make adjustments and assess new processes and knowledge as required to anchor change and maintain senior leaders' on-going commitment (Deszca et al., 2020). In my role as a change leader, I will support the change team to support and evaluate the institutionalization of new policies—including the self-reporting tool—and facilitate discussions, where necessary, to mitigate risk these transformative changes. Below, I further

describe the importance of measuring and understanding stakeholders' reactions during this change implementation.

Stakeholders' Reactions and Concerns

This OIP advocates a social justice change that entails risks, including a potentially significant emotional impact on stakeholders and participants. Consequently, stakeholders must respond appropriately to racialized employees' concerns from the outset to minimize any negative change effects and foster trust in the change team's capacities and skills. The previous discussion provided a limited overview of potential stakeholder ambivalence and resistance, particularly in the awakening-discovery phase as well as the mobilization-dream phases. Potential mitigation strategies include the promotion of ethical practices and encouraging meaningful engagement in decision-making. In this regard, two-way, transparent, and authentic communication is essential to alleviate any fears and anxieties that might contribute to stakeholder resistance (Deszca et al., 2002; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

This OIP includes short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals and priorities with different stakeholder involvement throughout. Below, I briefly describe these various stakeholders' respective goals and priorities at different stages of implementation.

Goals and Priorities

As previously discussed, the implementation plan can be sub-divided into short, medium, and long-term goals. Table 3 presents the specific goals required for the desired future, each of which are linked to the CPM/CAP stages models.

Table 2

Short-, Medium- & Long-Term Goals

Short Term Goals	Medium Term Goal	Long-Term Goal
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Build urgency to the need for change · Conduct gap analysis · Build readiness for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Form change team through -invite to select stakeholders for change team · Communicate vision and demonstrate benefits of vision · Get feedback through surveys, focus groups · Form cross-sector group to discuss, and review policies and procedures · Form a task force to design and pilot a self-reporting tool · Pilot racism self-reporting tool · Launch professional learning for school leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · DGL policies and practices address structural barriers · launch self-reporting racism tool · Create a culture of accountability · Shift to a critical social justice view · A shift of language and behaviours from senior leaders to principals and managers
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As a medium-term goal (see Appendix D), the human resources manager will help form the change implementation team by inviting key stakeholders from various sectors (including myself) to work together towards the change vision described in this OIP. As a knowledge broker, I will present the change team with research-based evidence to help stakeholders better understand the intersection of racism and mental health. Ideally, the leadership team's acquisition of this knowledge—including the necessary language to describe institutional racism—will catalyze transformative leadership. Consequently, the leadership team will gain an enhanced ability to critique current policies, procedures, and normative practices at DGL, which can expand their capacity to implement both educational and social change (Shields, 2010). Stage one begins the data collection necessary to complete the organizational gap analysis, the completion of which will deepen stakeholders' understanding of racialized staff's needs and perspectives. This evidence will further support the broader change vision which aims to operationalize ally-based leadership practices that more fully address race-based stress and covert racism.

Achieving the medium-term goals will occur during the mobilization-dream stage, which seeks to move the change team forward in exploring possibilities and innovative change avenues. First, stakeholders partaking in the change process will need a deep understanding of the “what and why” of change before creating the self-reporting tool to assess and respond to racial discrimination complaints. Second, a cross-sector racialized group will review human resource policies, procedures, and practices. The change team will then leverage senior leaders' positional power as sponsors of change.

However, the long-term goals inherent to the acceleration-design and institutionalization-destiny require a lengthy implementation period. Thus, the change team

must consider and advocate for the various resources and support necessary to achieve these goals and priorities for change. Once consensus is reached on the appropriate path forward, the change team will define the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and communicate the need for change to the entire DGL staff before the task forces begin their work.

Potential Implementation Challenges

As Lopez and Thomas (2006) suggest, “one of the biggest challenges of racial equity work [in the organization when it is a delegated task] by the people with the most power in an organization to engage in a process that ought to shift how power is used and by whom” (p. 9). However, doing this work often depends on the activism and advocacy of racialized people with the least power in the organization to act as catalysts for change with the support and white allies. However, without feeling safe in this role—formally known as a psychosocial safety climate—these staff risk being perceived and portrayed as aggressive troublemakers that purport to see racism in situations where white counterparts do not believe that it exists. Crucially, these undermining interpretations can significantly limit advocates’ efforts in the change plan for fear of judgment or retaliation (Lopez & Thomas, 2006).

Furthermore, a lack of engagement may also result from leaders’ perception that change is not in their best interest; or, put differently, that change may cost them more than any potential gains in terms of power relationships, time, and resources (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008; Milner, 2007). To mitigate these challenges, I will leverage my role to influence senior leaders to take ownership, emotionally engage in the change, and then highlight their vested interest in driving change. Notably, these actions depend on the strength of my existing relationships; thus, I would seek to emphasize how sustained commitment towards social justice aligns with senior leadership’s long-term goals in moving the organization towards innovative practices with tangible impact—particularly with respect to provincial mandates for DEI initiatives.

Nevertheless, school leaders might not fully embrace or commit to change, particularly if their perceptions and assessments differ from the change team's vision (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Previous research has found that middle managers, in particular, have a low tolerance for change due to an assumption that they will not receive the necessary skills or behaviour required to support the proposed changes, nor adapt to the new organizational climate (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Thus, early participation in the change process can mitigate some of these challenges by increasing commitment to the change vision in lieu of mere compliance (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). However, a significant drawback to this participation process is that it is time-consuming and can lead to ineffectual solutions if not adequately managed. At the same time, this nevertheless presents an opportunity to improve the communication messaging and increase buy-in and participation in the change vision.

A thorough understanding of the obstacles and issues can also inform the change team of the required adjustment to the implementation plan. Thus, the evaluation and monitoring process needs to actively consider these challenges at all stages of the change plan.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

This OIP aims to improve mental health support for DGL racialized staff from the perspective of an anti-racist and equity lens. As previously described in chapter 2, a combined model of Deszca et al.'s (2020) The Change Path Model (CPM) and Ridley-Duff, & Duncan's (2015) Critical Appreciative Process (CAP) will outline implementation and advance the objectives of this OIP. At every stage, monitoring and evaluation will ensure that the action plan meets its goals.

Notably, monitoring and evaluation have different functions and naturally overlap. Although both processes inform planning and decision-making, (Cox et al., 1999; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016) monitoring is instrumental in gauging progress and requires continuous supervision of activities that are taking place. (Gopichandran & Krishna, 2012);

conversely, evaluation is periodic and builds on monitoring processes to determine change effectiveness while serving as a compass for future change phases. As Leiderman (2005) posits, evaluation is generally not a neutral process. Instead, since people's viewpoints are shaped by privilege and power, this, in turn, influences the evaluation focus regarding what priorities and which types of evidence are given weight and credibility.

For this reason, Deming's (1986) four-step Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model, as discussed in the following section, is the most appropriate tool to guide monitoring and evaluation. As a tool that is already well-known and accepted in the education sector (Source), this model can empower staff to take ownership of process improvements throughout the change process (Magnuson et al., 2020).

PDSA

Importantly, PDSA presents a pragmatic and iterative approach that aligns well with the combined Change Path Model (CPM) and Critical Appreciative Process (CAP) to promote a deeper understanding of the organization's operationalization (Cleary, 2015; Deszca et al., 2020). Both models are data-driven and facilitate continuous learning, uncover implementation challenges, and evaluate and refine intervention protocols rapidly after implementation (Coury et al., 2017; Deszca et al., 2020; Woodhouse et al., 2013). As exhibited in Appendix A, the PDSA cycle describes the monitoring activities and evaluation questions that will allow the change team to assess appropriateness, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). These evaluative questions will enable the change team to adopt a learning approach supported by a reflective critical inquiry that contributes to the necessary dialogue required to (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016) develop a shared solution (Magnuson et al., 2020).

Plan

Notably, the Plan phase corresponds to the first phase of Deszca et al.'s (2020) CPM and Ridley-Duff & Duncan's (2015) CAP awakening-discovery. The planning stage also overlaps with the mobilization-dream phase of CPM and CAP's medium-term goal to establish two respective task forces. Broadly, the planning stage focuses on building urgency

for the change and defining the problem to be addressed. As a change agent, my role is to raise awareness among senior leaders using internal and external data.

The discovery dimension of the planning stage provides the groundwork for collaborative conversations that invite stakeholders such as senior leaders, school principals, managers, and the president of the principals' association (ADFO) to re-examine pre-existing assumptions. As strategies that can increase understanding of race-based stress, system racism, bias, and racial discrimination, reflective inquiry and storytelling provide an important counter-narrative for racialized staff. These strategies also provide opportunities for the change team to foster collaboration and support cross-racial conversations as previously described by Singleton and Linton's (2006) framework. These conversations are crucially in creating new pathways and perspectives (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015), particularly with respect to equity changes that are broadly inspired by TSUL—specifically with respect to Ubuntu principles (Shields, 2020; Ncube, 2010)

Table 2 *Monitoring and Evaluation Activity Plan*

PDSA	Monitoring Activities	Evaluation Questions	Stakeholders	Indicators
<p>“Plan” May---Janvier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate data to establish a baseline in terms of setting goals and the need for change • Plan racialized staff focus group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan school leaders' focus group • Shares professional learnings calendar and training delivery training and web-based discussion board • Change team meeting calendar • Disseminate change vision • HRD to establish the change team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post evaluation of racialized staff f and school leader focus groups • anonymous online survey to staff • Monthly professional learning evaluation • Change team meeting records • Task forces meeting records • Feedback on central email • Formal and informal conversation with ADFO president 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been increased understanding, awareness, and knowledge of the impacts of racial discrimination? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change agent • HR • Staff • AFDO president • Task forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change and adoption of transformative leadership in discourse • Commitment to the mandate of deep equity
<p>“Do”: January – April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting an online self-reporting tool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share draft or review policies • Professional learning for school leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task forces meetings record: Are deadlines being met? • Track key stakeholders’ feedback on the draft review of policies • Track feedback on centralized email • Self-reporting tool records of utilization, feedback, and participant demographics • Feedback survey -professional learning • Formal and informal conversation with ADFO president 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the surveys and focus group strategies supported by the transformative servant Ubuntu leadership framework (deep equity, healing growth, community, polyocular vision)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change agent • Equity and human rights officer • Human resources • School leaders • Senior leadership • ADFO president 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in school leaders’ racial literacy • Change in school leaders’ practices
<p>“Study”: April – June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes data from original and new sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task forces secretaries’ feedback • Feedback surveys for ongoing monitoring of professional learning • Challenges and obstacles experienced • Tracking trends emerging from the self-reporting tool report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What part of the plan needs to be revised or adjusted? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change team • Change agent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen cooperation and partnership among stakeholders
<p>“Act”: September - Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change team to decide to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -Act (continue course) • -Abandon (discontinue course) • -Adapt (adjust/realign the solution) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official systemwide launch of racism self-reporting tool and new policies • What adaptations are needed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the next step for the change team? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources director change agent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing and transparent communication with stakeholders

The change team will organize two focus groups that each comprise of ten participants. One focus group is dedicated to racialized staff with the mandate to gather qualitative information and feedback on their lived experiences, perceived experiences of racial discrimination, and viewpoints on current policies and current mental health supports. This focus group has the potential to be emotionally loaded due to the racial trauma of confronting systemic racism. Thus, as the facilitator, I will promote a safe environment that promotes emotional healing and creates value as a community for participants (Greenleaf, 2002; Spears, 2010).

The second focus group will focus on the role of school principals and managers, specifically with respect to anti-racist practices, competencies, and leadership (Diem et al., 2019; Spikes, 2018). Notably, evidence shows that supportive school leadership behaviours can mitigate and reduce the prevalence of workplace mental health problems (Davenport, 2016; van Dierendonck et al., 2004). Thus, I plan to meet with the ADFO president to discuss the implementation plan and, more precisely, create a professional development calendar for school leaders.

The change team will use surveys, feedback, inquiry, and ongoing conversation to monitor progress. This will include an anonymous online survey sent to all staff and administrators, as well as data generated from the surveys and focus groups. Combined, this data will help the change team establish a baseline in setting goals and clarifying what information needs to be captured, monitored, and evaluated (Gilmour et al., 2019; Magnuson et al., 2020). Next, in the 'do' stage, the change leader and the team will ensure that solutions are implemented and measured.

Do

The change team will organize two focus groups that each comprise of ten participants. One focus group is dedicated to racialized staff with the mandate to gather qualitative information and feedback on their lived experiences, perceived experiences of racial discrimination, and viewpoints on current policies and current mental health supports. This focus group has the potential to be emotionally loaded due to the racial trauma of confronting systemic racism.

Thus, as the facilitator, I will promote a safe environment that promotes emotional healing and creates value as a community for participants (Greenleaf, & Spears, 2002; Spears, 2010).

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Study

The study and the acceleration-design work combine to accelerate and consolidate progress, maintain momentum, ensure continuous communication, and celebrate small wins and milestones on the path to change (Deszca et al., 2020). Data gathered in previous stages will enable the change team to determine whether or not the plan is working and what—if any—modifications are necessary to the change plan; finally, this stage highlights what has been learned to-date throughout the process (Magnuson et al., 2020). As previously noted, my ongoing conversations with the ADFO president combined with post-training feedback surveys will help me monitor school leaders' progress with respect to these professional development goals. The learning plan will then evaluate if this training has increased school principals and

managers' ability to build trust, engage in self-reflection about their culture, confront social justice and domination, and transform practices (Howard, 2010).

Additionally, reports of the piloted self-report tool and the revised policy procedures will help determine areas of successful improvements and areas that still need future modifications to boost the next iteration cycle of change (Magnuson et al., 2020; Woodhouse et al., 2013). The change teams will liaise with the task forces secretaries continue to track and monitor change. These evaluations in 'study' will be guided by critical inquiry; for instance, the following questions can support a preliminary evaluation of the reporting tool: What was the processing time for reported situations? How were these situations assessed, and how were they processed? How can the report's author follow up on the treatment process? How was the self-report author informed of the follow-ups done? Are school leaders developing and incorporating new anti-racist skills and competencies into their practices? In leveraging the asynchronous resources provided with the professional development modules, I will encourage school leaders to engage and use these resources for their on-going reflection and continuous learning.

Act

A year into the implementation, the final step of the PDSA—the 'act' phase—seeks to institutionalize and anchor new anti-racist leadership practices and policies into the organizational culture (Descza et al., 2020). Thus, senior leaders are to communicate the results and successes of this first change cycle to all interested stakeholders. Continuous monitoring and feedback gathered in the previous phase (Christoff, 2018) will then assist the change team in identifying future actions and next steps. Evaluation in this final 'act' phase requires the change team to continue dialogue with the ADFO president and task forces to assess what the plan has achieved. Since this broader implementation plan addresses the long-term goals of the PoP to create structures and mechanisms that tackle racial discrimination, build an accountability culture supported by senior leaders' ongoing commitment to DEI initiatives, and develop culturally responsive leadership behaviours, I will ensure that the evaluation process analyzes results from the 'study' stage and to

determine which elements of the implementation plan t need to be revised, adjusted, or abandoned.

Ultimately, the PDSA cycle promotes stakeholder engagement and buy-in. It also enhances DGL leaders' capacity to produce locally grown solutions and knowledge that can apply to other departments within the organization (Magnuson, 2020). Thus, communication is a core element of the PDSA process that promotes stakeholders' engagement and empowers them to influence change and decision-making through continuous feedback. To this end, the forthcoming section addresses a detailed communication plan for disseminating the need for change within the organization and the inherent need for the change process itself.

Communicating the Need for Change Process

Chapters 1 and 2 have addressed the 'why' and the 'what' of the OIP—why racialized staff deserve better mental health support and how to implement effective social justice changes. Next, change leaders must develop an effective communication plan and strategy to communicate changes prior to implementation to mitigate potential failure if messages for change are not established (Beatty, 2015). According to the Race & Equity in Philanthropy Group (REPG), the primary goal of a communication strategy designed to achieve racial equity is to create a positive narrative shift. In this respect, I will advise incorporating racial equity values and language in the communication plan to move stakeholders towards action (REPG, 2021). In communicating the importance and need for racial equity change, the best practice for DGL leadership is to use shared organizational values as a “bridge to discussing the roles of racial equity and inclusion in fulfilling those values for everyone” (REPG, 2021, p.6). As previously discussed, TSUL values of cooperation, respect, and community (NCube, 2010; Northouse, 2019) aligns with DGL corporate values of collaboration and acceptance (DGL, 2021).

Thus, the communication plan that best supports this OIP is designed according to Deszca et al. (2020) and relies on the following phases: pre-change approval, developing the need for change, midstream change and milestone communication, and finally, confirming

and celebrating the change phase. In each step, the communication strategy is sub-divided into several small plans. Later in this section, I discuss these stages in greater depth. This strategic communication plan is also supported by Klein's (1996) key principles in communicating for change.

Broadly, message and media redundancy is key for message retention. These include the following tenets.

- Face-to-face communication is most effective.
- Line authority is effective in communications.
- The immediate supervisor is a key agent for change.
- Leaders who sway opinions need to be identified and used.
- Employees retain personally relevant information more easily than general information.

Similarly, Beatty (2015) asserts that a successful communication plan should enable stakeholders to receive difficult messages, be introspective, interrogate old assumptions, and be open new knowledge and ways of doing things. Moreover, communication must be transparent to keep stakeholders informed as change moves forward (Deszca et al., 2020). Additionally, to promote information retention, targeted and tailored messages must be repeated. Finally, in the Develop the for change and Midstream phase to build stakeholders' capacity to act towards achieving a common goal (REPG, 2021). The following section and Table 4, below, describes the communication plan, including the tactics, target audience for messages, and timing of their distribution.

Table 3 *Communication Plan*

Communication Plan

Responsible	Tactics	Audience	Key Messages	Timing	Measurement
Change Agent	Pre-change Face-to-face or virtual presentation	Human Resource Director and Superintendent leadership team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your leadership and expertise are needed to lead change. Change is aligned with the multi-year strategic plan, including goals related to employee well-being, equity, diversity, and inclusion. This change can improve employee attendance and satisfaction, increasing potential outcomes across departments and sectors. 	May-June	100% participation in the presentation
HRD	Developing the need for change In-person or synchronous virtual meeting (in-person ideal) Pre-recorded capsule	Managers and Principals Educational staff/administrative staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your leadership and expertise are needed to lead change. This is an opportunity for you as leaders to deepen equity work. Increase accountability culture that enhances working culture and climate and improves staff morale. The scope of the employee well-being framework is aimed at strengthening organizational support by increasing equity-seeking groups' voice Your experiences provide a counternarrative to influence change and confront different levels of racism that impact your well-being in the workplace. The change will result in increased procedural justice. 	August Leadership meetings in August PLD training	Microsoft FORMS survey 90% participation Microsoft FORMS survey 90% participation
Change Agent and Change Team	Midstream Phase Electronic newsletter Principals' meetings face-to-face or Monthly emails Electronic newsletter Change blog	Managers, principals Educational staff/administrative staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your leadership and expertise are needed to lead change. Change is aligned with the multi-year strategic plan, including goals related to employee well-being, equity, diversity, and inclusion. The scope of the employee well-being framework is to strengthen organizational support by increasing your voice and visibility of your needs. Your experiences provide a counternarrative to influence change and confront different levels of racism that impact your well-being in the workplace. The change will result in increased procedural justice. 	September-June for the duration of change	Survey
HRD Change Team	Confirming Change Electronic newsletter Email	All key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changes that we have collectively achieved are as follows. Several lessons were learned that would be beneficial for the next phase of change 	September Ongoing	Website hits

Pre-Change Phase

This first step aims to provide a strong case to senior leadership (human resources director and the superintendents) and the AFDO chair as to why change is needed. Thus, the pre-change stage aligns with the awakening-discovery phase of the CPM and CAP model to raise awareness and articulate gaps; as previously noted, this will take place during May and June (Descza et al., 2020). As a change agent and change initiator, I will use Dutton et al.'s (2001) 'issue-selling' tactics to raise awareness and gain DGL leadership approval for the change. Importantly, an issue-selling perspective brings direct attention to the often-unnoticed actions of change agents (Dutton et al., 2001). For instance, senior leaders are unaware of the support I sometimes provide to racialized staff that reach out to me when they perceive that they have been mistreated or discriminated against. Therefore, I will use strategies such as packaging and framing to introduce and communicate the change to senior leaders and the ADFO chair in smaller incremental steps (Dutton et al., 2001)

This bid for action will encourage senior management to act as transformative leaders by exhibiting the moral courage required to interrogate and disrupt structural racism and racial discrimination (Hewitt et al., 201). Early involvement in the change process is crucial to increasing senior leadership buy-in and overall commitment to the change process (Descza et al., 2020; Dutton et al., 2001).

As Klein (1996) argues, face-to-face communication is the most effective due to its immediate impact; additionally, interactive communication drives participation and buy-in. Due to the sensitivity of the PoP, I will propose an in-person meeting that enables to discuss the many nuances and layers of the PoP, including the need for flexibility in adapting the communication approach. These key messages will be shared with senior leaders and the ADFO chair. This is important because their leadership and expertise is crucial to driving change. Additionally, to boost senior leaders' interest, I will draw attention to the alignment of the intended changes with the organization's multi-year strategic goals, priorities, and objectives, as well as other stakeholder concerns (Descza et al., 2020; Dutton et al., 2001).

Lastly, this change can improve employee attendance and satisfaction, which has the potential to increase a range of outcomes across departments and sectors.

Developing the Need for the Change Phase

In developing the need for change, the change leader must ensure that the communication strategy rests on evidence and data that provides school leaders and staff with a clear and convincing reason for the change (Deszca et al., 2020). This stage aligns with the mobilization-dream stage driven by democratic participation and co-creative processes that “emphasizes innovation and creativity, and as such, it implies a potential for fundamental change as regards roles, positions, and relationships between stakeholders” (Leino & Puumala, 2021, p.784). In this sense, establishing task forces makes room for creativity and innovation by positioning staff into specialist roles to influence change.

This stage of the communication plan provides the key players with the necessary awareness to take ownership of the change process. For instance, an in-person information session that raises school leaders’ awareness will be facilitated by the human resources director during the management leadership meeting in August. This information session will provide school leaders with a tailored message that specifies their role in advancing racial equity. Specifically, this messaging will describe the importance of their leadership, expertise, and power in implementing racial equity strategies and practices that promote the well-being and inclusion of all (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Spikes, 2018). Notably, professional development sessions and resources will support this work. Overall, this is an opportunity for school leaders to deepen their equity work and increase accountability-culture and work climate.

This same targeted and tailored communication process is planned for all staff members. Staff, for instance, will receive a message that invites them to get involved in the change process. I will assist the change team in planning a synchronous meeting session for all staff on the first pedagogical day in August. Similarly, human resources will emphasize the school board's commitment to confronting racial discrimination, strengthening organizational supports, and centring the voices of racialized staff as equity-seeking groups.

Notably, these targeted messages can increase stakeholders' engagement, growth, and social responsibility toward building a learning organization where all contributions are valued (Northouse, 2019; van Dierendonck, 2011). Thus, several communication channels will facilitate participation in this change process—including focus groups, surveys, task forces and regular communications (bulletins, emails, etc.)—to ensure maximum participation and transparent knowledge dissemination and change progress updates.

Evidence shows that immediate supervisors have more influence and impact on shaping employees' responses to change than senior leadership (Deszca et al., 2020; Klein, 1996). Thus, immediate supervisors can solidify and re-commit their staff's sense of purpose, trust, and meaning surrounding the change vision (Deszca et al., 2020; Klein, 1996). This is in conjunction with Klein's (1996) line authority as an effective communication channel. Klein (1996) notes that those in positions of authority hold practical and symbolic power with respect to communication; thus, he argues that line management does not obstructs participative or consensus-based processes, but instead "enhances the distribution of influence down through the hierarchy" (p. 35). This management style seeks to fully inform lower-level staff and make them communication partners in a collaborative and iterative process (Klein, 1996). Consequently, this OIP positions school leaders as a driving force for change because they can be leveraged as opinion leaders due to their influence on employees to adopt a particular view (Deszca et al., 2020; Klein, 1996). As a result, schools principal and managers are well-positioned to promote the necessary transformative orientation for the larger communication strategy.

At the end of this phase, all stakeholders will have received targeted messages that recognize their uniqueness, specificities, and interest with respect to the change vision—even though the message is consistent across groups (Beatty 2015; Klein, 1996). Notably, stakeholder groups, such as managers, principals, and staff directly affected by the change, will receive more detailed information and communication than less involved participants (Beatty, 2015). The change team will then measure the success of these tactics by subjectively

assessing the quality of attendance participation, question responses, and interest during the information and synchronous sessions.

Midstream Change Phase and Milestone Communication Phase

As the change momentum builds and progress is consolidated, participants can expect to receive regular communications and updates about next steps and—most importantly—how each stakeholder group will be affected by these changes (Klein, 1996). During the mobilization-dream and acceleration-design phases, the change team will repeat messages using multiple platforms and communication channels, including change blogs, electronic newsletters, staff meetings, principals' meetings, virtual or face-to-face conferencing, and monthly emails. As a result, the messages will mitigate rumours and misconceptions about the change to decrease ambivalence and resistance while, in turn, reinforcing stakeholders' commitment and ownership in change initiatives (Deszca et al., 2020).

As new data and feedback are generated, innovative orientations or adjustments to the existing language can—and probably will—occur during the CPM/CAP mobilization and acceleration phases. Thus, the communication strategy must be thoughtful and intentional, containing only the strategies most likely to convey information effectively (Klein, 1996). Additionally, on-going feedback will enable the change team to gauge employee acceptance and attitudes toward change. Notably, Deszca et al. (2020) point out that “extensive communication on the content of the change will be important as management and employees begin to understand new roles, structures and systems” (p. 351). Thus, as the novelty fades and fatigue sets in, and it will be important for the change leader to maintain interest and communicate excitement while remaining sensitive to the continued personal impact of the change (Deszca et al., 2020).

Confirming and Celebrating the Change Phase

Confirming and celebrating the change will mark the end of fourteen months of the change process. Thus, communication strategy will culminate in celebrating success,

identifying progress, and capturing lessons learned. Institutionalization of the change also alleviates the stresses that the change process might have brought on for stakeholders and other key players (Mishra & Bhatanagar, 2012). With the support of the superintendent team, the human resources director will send an email to all stakeholders with messages of celebration that invite personal reflections about unfulfilled goals and objectives; this serves to better prepare the organization for the next cycle of change. At this point, the change committee will continue monthly updates via the newsletter and a blog.

Ultimately, this communication plan, based on Deszca et al. (2020)'s four phases of change, considers the impact on key stakeholders and their motivation to move change forward. Pre-change is a crucial step in gaining approval and securing senior management's commitment to legitimize and set the tone—an essential step for any change aimed at social justice and equity. This communication strategy is also rooted in TSUL, particularly with respect to its emphasis on shifting and changing needs, overcoming potential obstacles, and promoting a plan that provides lasting equity. Ubuntu and servant leadership's interconnectedness principle and value will also ensure that the communication strategy exudes genuine authenticity and commitment to the change process. Thus, as a change agent, I will draw on the motivational forces of servant and Ubuntu leadership to communicate and describe the personal and organizational gains that can emerge from a collective desire to succeed (Molose et al., 2018).

Next Steps, Future Considerations

To build and strengthen school leaders' allyship, it is critical to enhance their respective cultural competency and racial consciousness through professional learning (Spikes, 2018). In this regard, Howard (2010) indicates that professional development sessions on racial literacies should include the following five phases: building trust, engaging personal culture, confronting social justice and domination, and transforming practices. Combined, these phases provide the foundation for the critical self-inquiry required for allies to dismantle institutional racism. To this end, Rogers and Mosley (2008) argue that these

development sessions must teach white leaders how to analyze white supremacy and whiteness as racially constructed identities (Rolon-Dow et al., 2021).

Equally important is the need to expand school leaders' awareness about how their own social identities impact their educational experiences and understanding of racism in their schools (Rolon-Dow, 2021). As principals and managers learn these skills, they can use language and critical frameworks to view demographics and incidents through racialized viewpoints. Mainly, racial literacy prompts principals and managers to reflect on their personal history of racial socialization. (Stevenson, 2014; Rolon-Dow, 2021).

Equity Assessment Focused on Mental Health

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Workplace Racial Affinity/Activism Group

Setting up an affinity group for racialized staff was one of the proposed solutions to address obstacles in the PoP; however, this strategy was not chosen for this first change cycle. Yet, although the affinity group was not included in the first phase of the project, but it

remains a worthwhile concept to pursue. When outlining a leadership change study, it is important to segment the change into small, meaningful, and achievable steps. This measure would be vital to preserving space of support and healing to cope with the impacts of micro-aggressions and combat racial isolation (Mawhinney et al., 2021). For instance, teacher activism in recent years has been instrumental in prompting a change in education. This phenomenon is explained as f:

Acts that challenge the status quo and seek to reconfigure asymmetrical power relations. Activism involves undermining structures that privilege particular social actors and marginalize others, and it aims to include in decision-making structures and processes those whose voices have been systematically muted. It paves the pathways for inclusion, access, and equity (Conner & Rosen, 2016, p. 2)

Put differently, such a space would provide educators and staff of colour with an environment to explore a sense of purpose, power, and possibility that helps teachers feel accomplished, renewed, and able to continue in their professional roles (Mawhinney et al., 2021). Some CRT experts argue that affinity groups can reinforce isolation because educational structures were not created for racialized people (Biscoe & Safford, 2015; Blitz and Kohli, 2012). However, incorporating elements of networking and activism that go beyond conventional functioning affinity groups can increase employee retention rates by affording staff of colour with opportunities to become more critical, brave, and exert agency in their workplace (Mosely, 2018).

Thus, in functioning as affinity groups, the networks within this study provided “teachers of colour” (how Mosely, 2018 defined the target group) with a way to connect with others who shared experiences of struggle. This study also went beyond traditional affinity group functions by giving said groups power through activism pedagogy. Therefore, racial affinity groups, in fact, can be harnessed to support community building, create space for racial justice-minded peers, provide a space for reflection, healing, and self-care, and an opportunity to discuss and propose a systemic plan for racial justice work (Pham & Kohli, 2018).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 presents the Change Path Model in conjunction with the Critical Appreciative Process as a participative model to guide the change implementation plan. This change plan in the awakening-discovery stage accentuates the voice and experience of racialized stakeholders through the data gathering. Secondly, the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle presents an iterative approach (Demings, 1986) to monitoring and evaluation that tracks change and measures the impact of the plan. A communication plan was developed using Deszca et al. (2020)'s Communication Plan for Change, which helps the change team to build awareness for change within the organization by using targeted messages to stakeholders.

Broadly, this implementation plan facilitated two-way communication to address concerns about change while also maintaining stakeholder enthusiasm to encourage their full participation in the decision-making of the change process. Within the context of this OIP, communication channels were identified to share milestones and wins with all stakeholders of the organization. The chapter concludes with the next steps and future considerations for the organization to explore to advance its equity strategy.

These ideas call for DGL to manifest bold, courageous leadership to dismantle structural and systemic racism. While this project is ambitious, the organization's readiness for change has been established, and the outlined implementation plan allows flexibility and adaptation to address potential setbacks

OIP Conclusion

In sum, the purpose of this OIP, as it relates to the PoP, is to enhance mental health support for racialized educators and staff of Des Grands Lacs (DGL) school board through an equity and anti-racist lens. This OIP is identity-affirming, acknowledges the effects of systemic racism and racial discrimination on educators' psychological well-being, and recognizes the intersection of multiple oppressions of racialized staff. Chapter 1 provided the organizational context of this OIP and outlined the leadership vision for leading change that focussed on building both internal and external capacity and strategic allyships. The assessment of readiness for change highlights the importance of senior management support

in providing direction and credibility to the change process. The subsequent critical organizational analysis undertaken in Chapter 2 indicates gaps and the need to generate knowledge that fosters and sustains efforts to achieve equity. Moreover, this analysis establishes the need to strengthen lateral communication and collaboration among key stakeholders in affirming and reinforcing staff well-being. The identified gaps will highlight necessary changes and solutions within policies and practices,

To this end, the combined solution of establishing a self-reporting racism tool for staff, coupled with a reviewing process of current policies, procedures, and practices led by a cross-sector task force, will bolster organizational and stakeholder capacity to develop, share and apply the knowledge that can sustain an accountability culture. This solution will enable the change leader to foster collaboration, mobilize key stakeholders, and stimulate greater communication and learning across different departments. The knowledge and learning generated will support the enactment of anti-racism strategies and actions that can dismantle structures and address racial discrimination. This will result in greater mental health support for racialized staff. This change plan thereby benefits the mental health and welfare of all staff by achieving the equity, diversity, and inclusion objectives of the DGL multi-year strategic plan.

To answer some of the questions raised in the first two chapters, Chapter 3 illustrates how the change initiative will be implemented, monitored, and communicated throughout the organization and to targeted stakeholders. To this end, tailored messages to key stakeholders will reinforce their commitment level and ensure that they take ownership of the change and adopt a shared vision to drive the change.

Ultimately, this OIP touches on a critical societal problem in the field of education that I view as a critical and timely public health issue. We must come together as a community with love, compassion, and an eagerness to dismantle racism in its many forms, given it is the root cause of much suffering in all spheres of life for people of colour.

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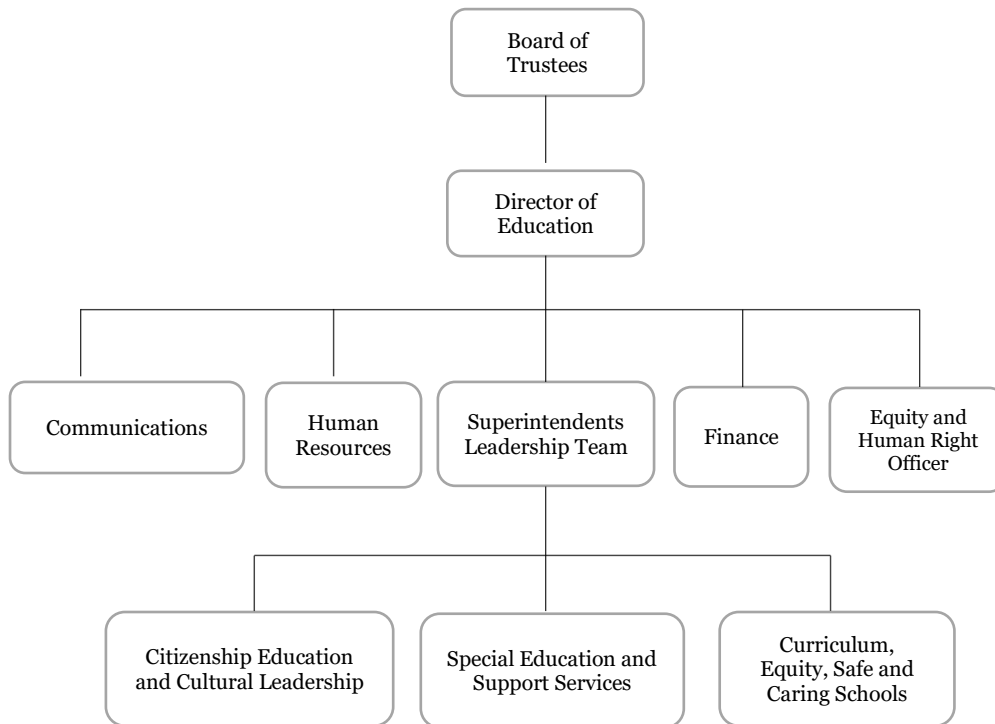
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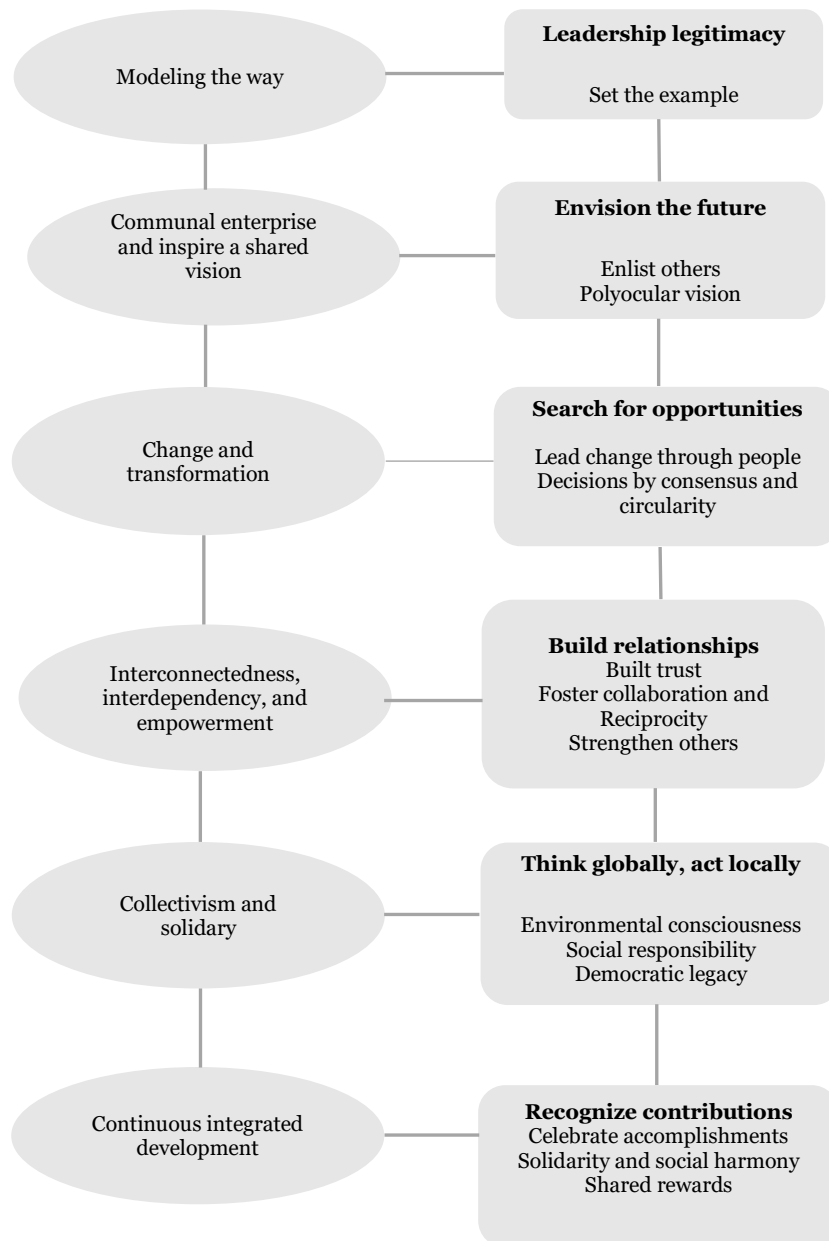
Appendix A: Des Grands Lacs Organizational Chart



Appendix B: Des Grands Lacs Score for Organizational Readiness for Change

Readiness dimensions	Readiness Score	Des Grands Lacs Scores
Previous Change Experience		
1. Has the organization had generally positive experiences with change?	0 to +2	2
2. Has the organization had recent failure experiences with change?	0 to -2	0
3. What is the mood of the organization: upbeat and positive?	0 to +2	1
4. What is the mood of the organization: negative and cynical?	0 to -3	-1
5. Does the organization appear to be resting on its laurels?	0 to -3	0
	Score	2
Executive Support		
6. Is senior leadership (the board of trustees and superintendent) directly involved in sponsoring the change?	0 to +2	1
7. Is there a clear picture of the future?	0 to +3	1
8. Is executive success dependent on the change occurring?	0 to +2	0
9. Has management ever demonstrated a lack of support?	0 to -3	0
	Score	2
Credible Leadership and Change Champions		
10. Are senior leaders in the organization trusted?	0 to +3	1
11. Are senior leaders able to credibly show others how to achieve their collective goals?	0 to +1	0
12. Is the organization able to attract and retain capable and respected change champions?	0 to +2	1
13. Are middle managers able to effectively link senior managers with the rest of the organization?	0 to +1	1
14. Are senior leaders likely to view the proposed change as generally appropriate for the organization?	0 to +2	1
15. Will the proposed change be viewed as needed by the senior leaders?	0 to +2	1
	Score	5
Openness to Change		
16. Does the organization have scanning mechanisms to monitor the environment?	0 to +2	2
17. Is there a culture of scanning and paying attention to those scans?	0 to +2	1
18. Does the organization have the ability to focus on root causes and recognize interdependencies both inside and outside the organization's boundaries?	0 to +2	1
19. Does "turf" protection exist in the organization?	0 to -3	-1
20. Are the senior managers hidebound or locked into the use of past strategies, approaches, and situations?	0 to -4	-1
21. Are employees able to constructively voice their concerns or support?	0 to +2	1
22. Is conflict dealt with openly, with a focus on resolution?	0 to +2	0
23. Is conflict suppressed and smoothed over?	0 to -2	-1
24. Does the organization have a culture that is innovative and encourages innovative activities?	0 to +2	1
25. Does the organization have communications channels that work effectively in all directions?	0 to +2	2
26. Will the proposed change be viewed as generally appropriate for the organization by those not in senior leadership roles?	0 to +2	2
27. Will the proposed change be viewed as needed by those not in senior leadership roles?	0 to +2	2
28. Do those who will be affected believe they have the energy needed to undertake the change?	0 to +2	0
29. Do those who will be affected believe there will be access to sufficient resources to support the change?	0 to +2	1
	Score	10
Rewards for Change		
30. Does the reward system value innovation and change?	0 to +2	0
31. Does the reward system focus exclusively on short-term results?	0 to -2	0
32. Are people censured for attempting change and failing?	0 to -3	0
	Score	0
Measures for Change and Accountability		
33. Are there good measures available for assessing the need for change and tracking progress?	0 to +1	0
34. Does the organization attend to the data that it collects?	0 to +1	1
35. Does the organization measure and evaluate customer satisfaction?	0 to +1	1
36. Is the organization able to carefully steward resources and successfully meet predetermined deadlines?	0 to +1	1
	Score	3
	Total	22

Appendix C: Ubuntu Leadership Framework



Adapted from: Ncube, L. (2010). Ubuntu: A transformative leadership philosophy. *Journal of Leadership Studies*. 4(3), 77-82. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.20182>

Appendix D: Implementation Plan, Actions, and Timeline

Goals and Timelines	Change Path Model-Critical Appreciative Inquiry	PDSA	Implementation Actions	Stakeholders
Short-Term May- June	<p>Awakening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raise awareness and confirm the need for change Create urgency for change ● Challenge status quo <p>Discovery Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the racist psychological injuries and where do they originate? ● What types of racial discrimination are experienced by racialized educators and staff? 	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raise urgency and senior leadership (SL), president of principals' association school -ADFO, schools leaders' awareness ● Secure senior leadership approval, commitment, and operational budget ● Gather evidence from multiple perspectives-external sources, board annual well-being survey, EDI professional learning surveys, focus groups, online survey ● Articulate gaps within current structures and practices that result in racial inequity and envisioned share data system wide ● Increase awareness, build organizational readiness, clarify goals and change outcomes ● Establish and disseminate a compelling polyocular vision that aligns with Board strategic planning ● Define the change team purpose, roles, responsibilities, and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● change agent ● Senior leaders ● ADFO president ● School leaders
Mid-Term September-February	<p>Mobilization-Dream</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess and leverage power and cultural dynamic to support and realize change <p>Dream Question</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the critical acts that map out possible ways to tackle structural racism, racial battle fatigue and microaggressions? 	Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Human resource direction (HRD) to extend invitation to members with influence, knowledge, capacities to partake in change team ● Establish cross-sector task force to meet monthly ● Establish task force to design self-reporting tool (monthly meeting) ● Create a central email for staff to share critical acts and feedback ● Update staff regularly on change vision and progress through various channels (HR bulletin, school staff meeting, internal online portal, emails, etc.) ● Complete first draft of new policies -feedback of key stakeholders ● pilot self-reporting tool over a three-month period ● Identify key milestones ● Launch racial equity professional learning for school leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Human resources director ● Change team ● equity and human rights officer ● ADFO president ● Racialized staff ● Human resources
Long - Term	Acceleration-Design	Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Final policy draft to be reviewed by senior leadership, ADFO president and school leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change team ●

<p>March-June</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ongoing engagement to build momentum <p>Design-Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What must be done to ensure the organization is not constructing, or sustaining systems that are racist and inequitable to racialized staff? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self-reporting tool Pilot outcomes measure for self-reporting tool ● Assess progress and make necessary adjustments ● Senior management approval of final draft of policies and of online self-reporting tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equity and human rights officer
<p>Ongoing September - ongoing</p>	<p>Institutionalization-Destiny</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anchoring solutions into cultural norms <p>Destiny- Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What has already been accomplished? What are the impacts? 	<p>Act</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adoption of new policies by Board of Trustees ● Report to Board of Trustees on pilot of self-report tool showing trends, analysis, and recommendation for improvements ● Official systemwide launch of self-reporting racism tool accessible on the organization website ● Continue tracking and gauging solutions; have solutions achieved measurement outcomes: procedural justice, cultural climate? ● Assess the extend the new policies and reporting and tracking tool have been institutionalized ● Maintain Senior leaders' commitment and set the stage for future improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change agent ● Change team ● Board of trustees ● Human resources director