



Fall 2023 Update on Responding to Incidents of Racism, Bias and Hate

To: Program and School Services Committee

Date: 21 February, 2024

Report No.: 02-24-4663

Strategic Directions

- Transform Student Learning
- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Truth and Reconciliation

Recommendation

It is recommended that this information report be received.

Context

The TDSB strives to uphold human rights through fostering learning and working environments that are accessible, respectful, and inclusive. The TDSB's comprehensive Human Rights policy promotes the need to both proactively foster a culture of human rights to benefit all, as well as respond to incidents/complaints.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) serves the needs of an increasingly diverse student and staff population. Currently, approximately 238,000 students are learning in 582 schools. This context is relevant in understanding the impact(s) and frequency of occurrences of bias, hate, and/or racism. It remains our foremost goal to eradicate discrimination in all of its forms because of the impact it has on individuals (students and staff), the school climate, and the academic achievement and wellbeing of our students.

The Racism Bias and Hate (RBH) Portal is an innovative approach to identify, track and monitor incidents involving or affecting students in TDSB schools, and initiate a system response consistent with board policies and requirements. Since its inception a few years ago, there has been increased use of the portal. This is expected with a newer

tool, more learning about identifying and preventing incidents of hate and racism and different identities, and a clear process for response. This endeavour is credit to the ongoing commitment to the safety and well-being of students and staff by creating a consistent process to guide responses to racism, bias, and hate in all TDSB schools.

The TDSB, however, is part of a local and global community which is experiencing the effects of many global crises as well as national, provincial and city-based events that impact our school communities. The Toronto Police Service has noted that there has been a rise in hate crime reports in 2023. At TDSB, there is a deep concern about racism, bias and hate, in particular, the harmful effects and manifestations of anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, antisemitism, anti-East Asian racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and other types of racism, bias and hate.

Many supports and strategies continue to be identified and implemented to foster students' and staff's sense of belonging, safety, and academic success. The TDSB's [Anti-Hate and Anti-Racism Strategy](#) is one of the key pillars supporting the endeavour to meet the needs of students from diverse faith communities, racial groups, sexual orientations and other intersecting identities.

The Summary of Findings, September to December 2023

This is a report about incidents of racism, bias and hate reported, recorded and addressed under Operational Procedure 728: *Reporting and Responding to Racism and Hate Incidents Involving or Impacting Students in Schools*, from September to December 2023. The summary findings of this data snapshot are in Appendix A. The following points are illustrated within the data:

- Compared to last year during the same period, there has been an increase in incidents that have been recorded in schools this year. At the time of this update, 211 more incidents were addressed than last year, and the number this year is 458. This represents 0.2% of the total student population in the TDSB.
- 81% of incidents are slurs/comments and 36% of incidents occurred at least partly in the classroom.
- 80% of incidents involved racism.
- As was the case last year, the vast majority of reported incidents involve anti-Black racism.
- The proportion of incidents that involved antisemitism has increased by 5 percentage points from 10 to 15% and there has been an increase in anti-East Asian racism of 4 percentage points from 6% to 10%.
- Islamophobia and anti-Middle Eastern racism each make up 4% of the incidents.

Practices in Educating about and Responding to Incidents of Hate, Discrimination and Bias

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Staff respond to reported incidents of racism, bias and hate in alignment with TDSB's commitment to creating safe, welcoming and inclusive environments. Central staff provide resources and guidance to support leaders in their thorough response and resolution of reported incidents involving students which include discipline (up to and including suspension/expulsion), education, support services and restorative practices. Classroom and school-based learning and activities include:

- learning modules about the historical origin of racial slurs
- educational book studies guided by educators
- classroom-based learning opportunities
- individual or small group counselling with TDSB clinicians
- regular check-ins by caring adults to provide support and discussions regarding feelings and safety
- professional learning opportunities for staff
- restorative practices as appropriate
- communication with the families of directly impacted students to outline actions taken and the on-going support plan
- assemblies and presentations co-planned with guests, community agencies, students and staff
- poster creation and student-led leadership presentations (under the guidance of a staff member)
- collaboration with the school council on strategies to raise the awareness of parents/guardians/caregivers

Proactively, school leaders and teams embed goals and actions within School Improvement Plans that promote safe and caring environments and nurture joy and belonging. Examples of school improvement actions include:

- discussions regarding incidents with staff to identify needs, remedial measures and proactive prevention measures
- continuous professional learning to deepen critical understanding of equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression
- intentional curation of library and classroom resources to positively reflect students' intersectional identities and lived experiences
- establishment and sponsorship of student affinity groups (i.e., Black Student Alliance, Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Jewish Student Alliance and Muslim Student Alliance)

The Urban Indigenous Education Centre (UIEC) continues to engage in proactive initiatives to respond to anti-Indigenous racism incidents and systemic manifestations of anti-Indigenous racism. Work to implement the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) and to advance Indigenous Education by centering Indigenous knowledge systems in school improvement processes is ongoing.

Through initiatives like Biidaaban: Truth and Reconciliation Project, and Aanse: Indigenous Student Well-Being and Achievement Strategy (for schools with the highest numbers of Indigenous students) the UIEC has created learning opportunities to support school leaders and all educators to prevent, identify, and respond to anti-Indigenous

narratives and actions through whole school processes. Alongside such initiatives across the system, the UIEC works with educators of the revised First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies courses, including NBE3: Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, in ways that respond directly to the attempted erasure of Indigenous experiences and knowledge systems. For the last two years, the UIEC has also offered a course specifically focused on confronting anti-Indigenous racism and is collaborating on the Combatting Hate and Racism Strategy.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

Staff will incorporate the feedback received from the Board into the next annual Human Rights report (2022-2023). It is anticipated that the annual Human Rights report will be presented to the Board at the end of the school year.

Next Steps will include:

- Increasing capacity building for addressing incidents of racism, bias and hate.
- Build on early indicators of systemic change related success
 - Continue to foster conditions to increase comfort for reporting incidents.
 - Continue to advance identification of incidents of racism, bias and hate
 - Continue with identifying and implementing effective strategies for prevention and remediation.

Resource Implications

The current portal was established as a process to improve the identification and response to incidents, not for the purposes of reporting data bi-annually. As such, the creation of this report was a time intensive commitment by staff. Regular responsibilities were impacted in order to focus on the development of this report since October. It is for these reasons that the December 8, 2023 Board Resolution entitled *Combating Hate and Promoting Understanding: Part C (“That reports on the data from the Racism, Bias and Hate Portal be reported on (to the Board of Trustees) three times per year including in the Annual Human Rights Report.”)* cannot be fulfilled as directed using current human and digital resources. However the Annual Human Rights Report and Combating Hate and Racism Reports will incorporate information about the programs and resources used to respond and prevent racism, bias and hate. In order to fully implement Part C of the aforementioned Board Resolution, a new data collection system will need to be designed and implemented. Further analysis will be required to determine the cost and timeline for this work. Building staff capacity and providing resources for support continue to be a priority.

It is recommended that an evaluation of the need to establish provincial reporting standards or guidance for the public sector (e.g. school boards) be developed by the Government of Ontario.

Communications Considerations

Information from this report will be shared with employees, parents, guardians and caregivers through regular channels.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

- Human Rights Policy (P031)
- Reporting and Responding to Racism and Hate Incidents Involving or Impacting Students in Schools (PR728)
- Safe and Caring Schools (P051)

Appendices

- Appendix A: Racism, Bias and Hate Data (Fall Comparison 2023)
- Appendix B: Addressing Racism, Bias, and Hate in Schools

From

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Racism, Bias and Hate Incidents, Data Snapshot

This special report describes racism, bias and hate incidents involving or impacting students during September 1st to December 31st of 2023 in TDSB schools. These are incidents that were reported, recorded and addressed in accordance with Board Operational Procedure 728: *Reporting and Responding to Racism and Hate Incidents Involving or Impacting Students in Schools*. These incidents were entered into the Racism, Bias and Hate Portal - a recently introduced digital system designed to systematically process potential incidents in schools involving students.

The portal's primary purpose is to aid in addressing incidents that occur in schools, it was not designed as a research tool for analysis of potential changes in incidents affecting schools over time.

Caution must be used in analyzing these breakdowns and comparing them to previous years due to two interrelated dynamics in the identification of incidents within schools and the subsequent use of the portal to process these incidents as follows:

1. the variability in the identification of incidents and the subsequent use of the portal to process these incidents at schools.
2. the increasing use of the portal to process ongoing incidents as schools become more familiar with the tool.

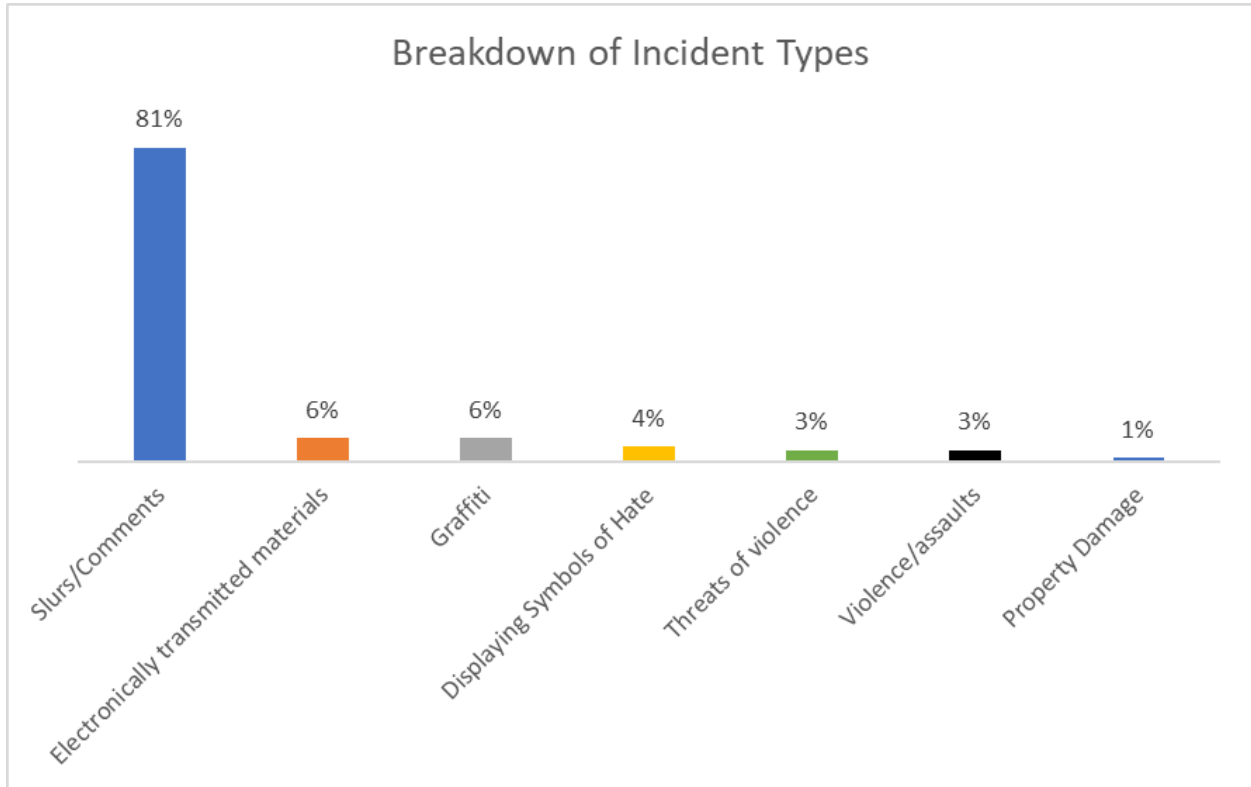
The statistics below provide a breakdown of the context(s) of the incidents and then follow with a summary of the types of incidents. Where relevant, previous year's data will be used for comparison. The incidents analyzed are reported on an aggregate basis to maintain the confidentiality of students and other parties involved.

Summary of Findings

- There were 458 total closed¹ incidents processed by schools. This represents 0.2% of the total student population in the TDSB. It is an increase from the previous year over the same period by 211 incidents.
- The majority (81%) of the incidents involved *comments or slurs* (Figure One).
- Over one-third of incidents were reported as occurring in the classroom. This represents a decrease of 8 percent from incidents occurring in the classroom over the same period last year (Figure Two).

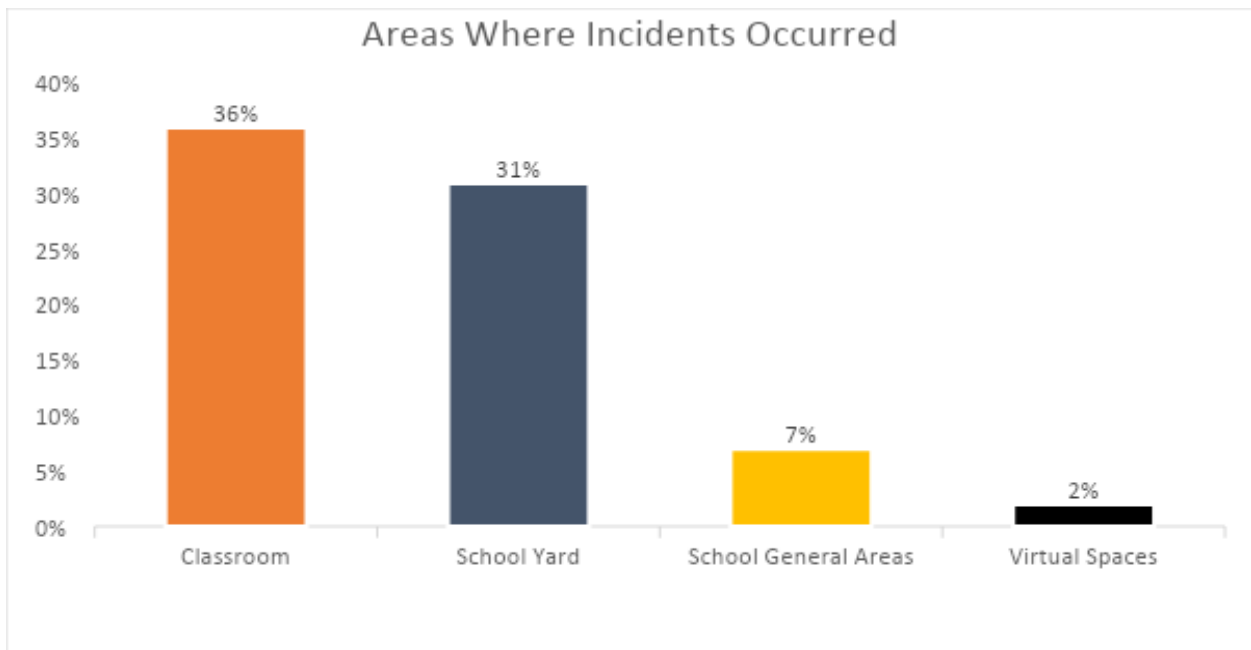
¹ The term 'closed' means the incident was recorded and concluded or addressed in accordance with Board procedure PR728.

Figure One: Breakdown of Incident Types



***Percentages do not add up to 100 due to a single incident potentially involving more than one category**

Figure Two: Areas Where Incidents Occurred



***Please note a significant proportion of incidents recorded by schools did not indicate a location.**

***Percentages do not add up to 100 due to a single incident potentially involving more than one category**

Figure Three: Racism, Bias and Hate Incidents

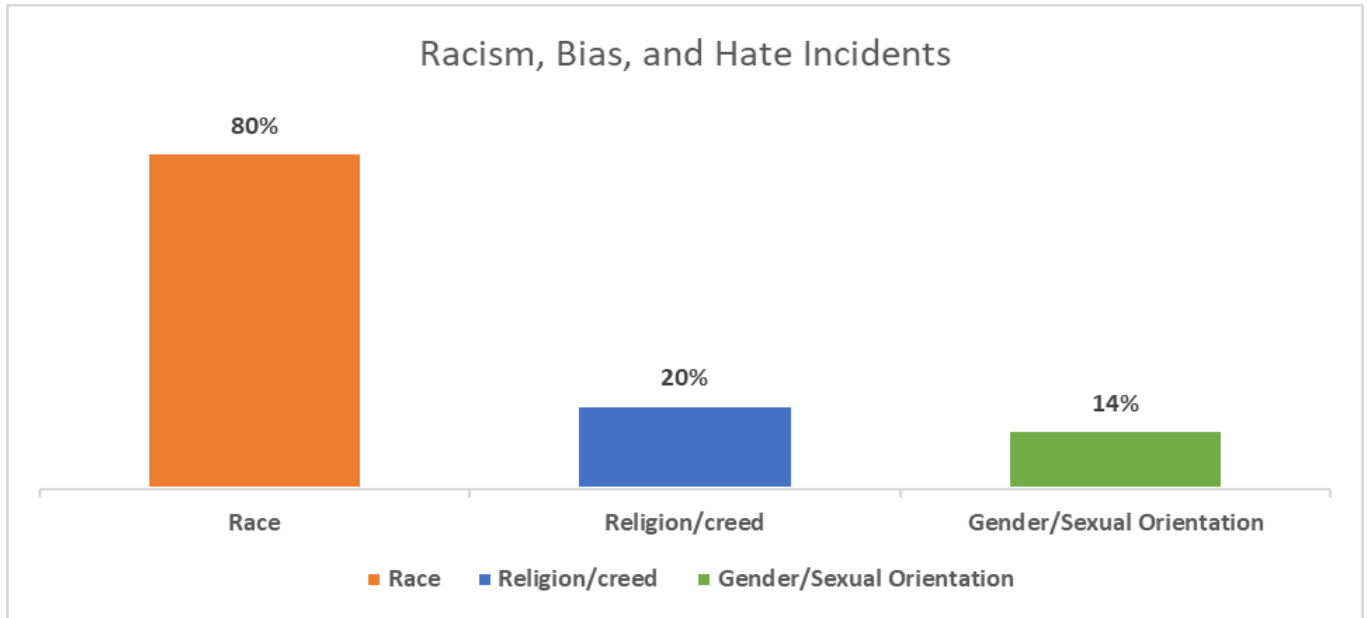
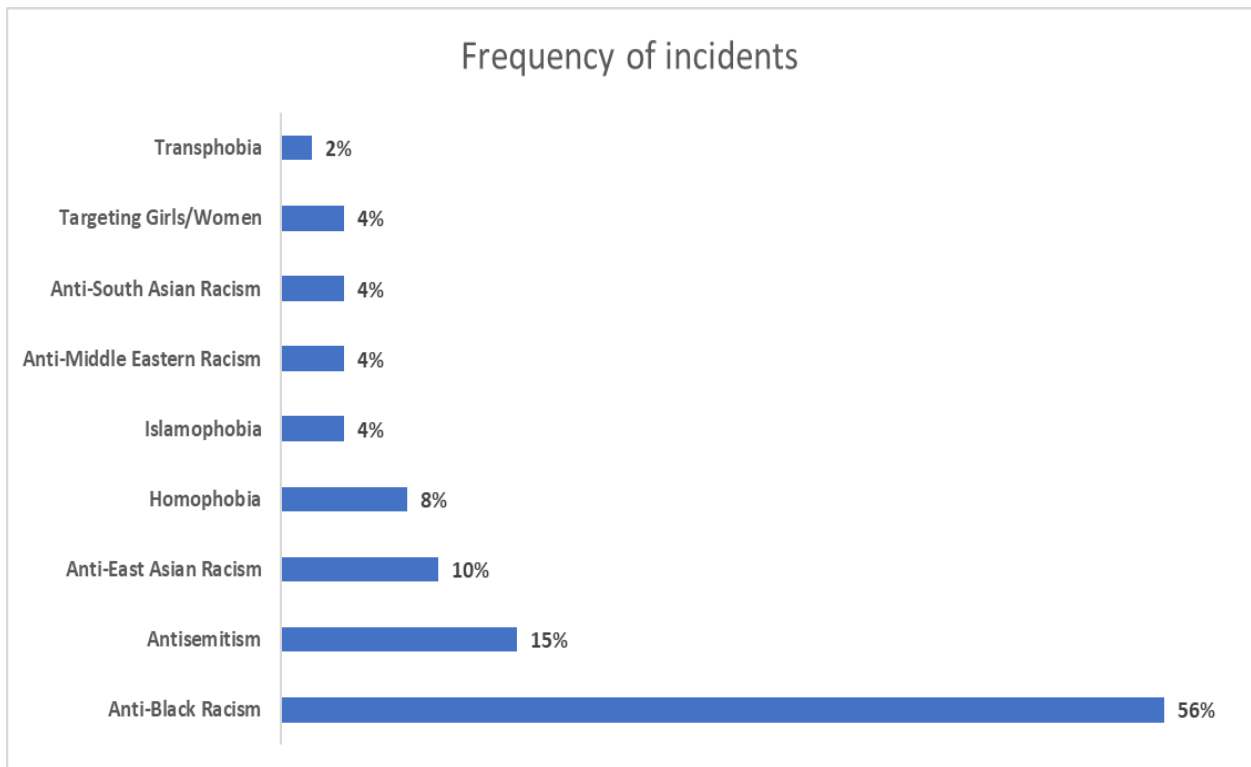


Figure Four: Frequency of Incidents

***Percentages do not add up to 100 due to a single incident potentially involving more than one category**



***Percentages do not add up to 100 due to a single incident potentially involving more than one category**

Summary of Findings

- In September-December 2023, 8 out of 10 incidents involved racism (Figure Three).
- 1 out of 5 incidents involved creed/religion. 15% of the incidents involved antisemitism and 4% of the incidents involved Islamophobia (Figure Four).
- The proportion of antisemitic incidents has increased by approximately 5 percentage points and the proportion of East Asian racism increased by 4 percentage points.
- The vast majority of reported incidents involve anti-Black racism at 56%. While this proportion has gone down by 7 percentage points from last year, the total number of incidents may have gone up given the overall increase in numbers.
- Less than 1% of the incidents involved anti-Indigenous racism.



Addressing Racism, Bias, and Hate in Schools

Our Commitment

The TDSB is committed to the safety and well-being of our students and staff, and we endeavor to provide learning and working environments that are accessible, respectful, and inclusive for all members of our community.

The Racism, Bias, and Hate Portal

The Racism, Bias, and Hate Portal provides school administrators with a streamlined process for identifying and tracking incidents in our schools, which initiates a system response to best support our students, staff, and broader school community. Our supports and interventions include:



Partnership with Parents and Community
Student and Staff Affinity Groups
Parent Conferences



Culturally Responsive Mental Health and Well-being Services
Support from Caring and Safe Schools, Human Rights, and Equity Teams
Restorative Practice



Ongoing Professional Learning
Student Learning Experiences
Classroom-based Learning Opportunities
Culturally Responsive Curriculum Resources



TDSB Policies and Procedures
TDSB Code of Conduct
Anti-Hate and Anti-Racism Strategy
Progressive Discipline

What should you do if you have experienced or witnessed an incident?

If you have experienced or witnessed an incident of racism, bias, or hate in our schools, please report the incident to your school principal. For more information on reporting an incident, please visit our [website](#).

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